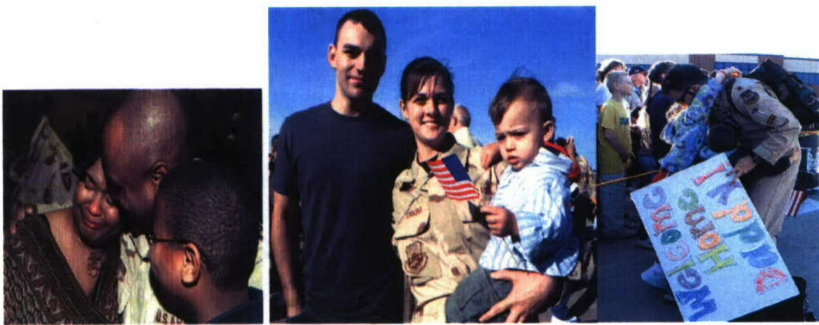


# Fort Riley Military Family Survey: Family Decisions to Accompany Soldiers Study



School of Family Studies and Human Services  
College of Human Ecology, Kansas State University

June 30, 2008

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14. ABSTRACT The survey is a written product that analyzes and provides results on why FRKS-based Soldiers made the decision to either bring or not bring their families with them to FRKS. The survey includes demographics and provides an analysis of factors that led to a decision to bring or not bring Soldier families to FRKS. The survey was conducted online, hard-copy, and over the phone with FRKS-based personnel and family members that are currently living in the Fort Riley area as well as those not currently residing in the immediate FRKS community.					
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All requests for information related to this document must go through Fort Riley Public Affairs.

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## Executive Summary

The Fort Riley Military Family Survey: *Family Decisions to Accompany Soldiers Study* was conducted from March-June 2008. This study was initiated at the request of MG Robert Durbin, Commanding General, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division and Fort Riley. The purpose of this study was to better understand why families choose to accompany or to not accompany their Soldier spouse when he/she is transferred to Fort Riley, Kansas (FRKS). An additional outcome of the study was to determine areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with various factors that influence quality of life in the Greater Fort Riley Community (GFRC). The factors included in the survey were: Deployment, Housing/Neighborhood, Employment of Spouse, Health Care, Child Care, Educational Opportunities for Spouse/Children, Recreational Activities, Unit Morale/Climate, and Family Support Services. A final outcome of the study was to determine the level of satisfaction Soldiers and Soldier spouses had with Army Community Services (ACS).

The study included data from 1,456 (usable data) Soldiers and Spouses participating in the web-based KSU survey. Results indicated that over half (53.8%) of the respondents whose Families relocated to the GFRC with the Soldiers was due to their desire to remain together as a family, regardless of other factors. For Families who did not accompany the Soldier to the GFRC, the top factors that influenced their decision not to relocate to the GFRC included: Deployment (59.6%), Housing/Neighborhood (44.7%), Spouse Employment (43.8%), Other Family Factors (30.6%), and Educational Opportunities (23.4%).

The top areas of satisfaction included: Family Support Services, Recreational Activities Off-Post, Educational Opportunities for Spouse/Children Off-Post and Health Care Off-Post. The top areas of dissatisfaction with the GFRC included: Housing/Neighborhood Factors, Health Care Factors On-Post, Employment of Spouse, and Deployment Factors.

Nearly two-thirds of Soldiers and Soldier spouses who completed the KSU survey had never used Army Community Services (37%), were unfamiliar with ACS (4%), or were neutral (24%), neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, with ACS. Of those who had used such services and were not neutral, 23% of participants were satisfied with ACS and 12% were dissatisfied with ACS programs. It appears that a significant number of Soldiers and Family members have "bypassed" ACS assistance programs; however, the data to determine why Soldiers and Families are not using ACS programs is not available from the current study.

Additional recommendations for future research and program implications include addressing current housing, spouse employment, and health care issues affecting Soldiers and Families in the GFRC. The proposed research program to follow-up this initial Family survey includes the following components: 1) a Family Clinical Services



Program, dedicated to PTSD/Combat Operational Stress and TBI treatment and research with Soldiers and their Family Members, which will provide state-of-the-art training and education related to family-based services for Military personnel; 2) the Army Families TODAY Project, a study of successful, "resilient" Army couples and families which will inform intervention and educational programs to assist couples and families during the current OIF/OEF deployment and reintegration phases of Army life; and 3) program evaluation of current Army Community Service programs at FRKS.

## Survey Description

**Comment [CoHE1]:** Past/Present Tense issues—I tried to catch those that stood out.

The purpose of this study was to better understand why families choose to accompany or not to accompany their Soldier spouse when he/she was transferred to Fort Riley, Kansas (FRKS). The study was requested by MG Robert Durbin. The study asked for both Soldiers and Spouses to participate in the survey. Survey responses were confidential; names or other identifying information were not associated with individual answers and data were collected utilizing a secured survey site at Kansas State University (KSU).

Overall, the questions to be answered by the survey were:

- What were the key factors that influenced your family's decision to relocate or not relocate to the Greater Fort Riley Community?
- If you did choose to relocate to the Greater Fort Riley Community:
  - What factors most influence your quality of life?
  - How satisfied are you with Army Community Services?

The results from the current study will provide Fort Riley commanders with information about the key factors that motivated families to accompany Soldiers to Fort Riley, the factors that caused Families to not accompany Soldiers to Fort Riley, and recommendations for programs to improve Family relocation to Fort Riley.

**PROCEDURES AND METHODS USED:** The current study included two phases: 1) Focus groups with military Soldiers and Family members that identified factors that contributed to accompanying or not accompanying the Soldier to Fort Riley, Kansas, including a web-based qualitative survey for Military Families not currently at Fort Riley, and 2) the development and dissemination of a web-based survey instrument that was distributed to Soldiers and Spouses to address these key relocation factors.

The web-based survey instrument was developed by the KSU Researchers and reviewed by the Fort Riley Command Group. The survey was approved by the KSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and disseminated through a survey link through the KSU Axio Survey System. Survey participants were identified by the Fort Riley leaders by means of email invitations to participate, followed by providing those self-selecting participants the survey web link.

Participants reviewed the initial informed consent form on-line, then were asked their current status (Soldier or Spouse; Accompanied to Fort Riley or Did Not Accompany to

Fort Riley). Participants then chose up to 4 factors (e.g., deployment, housing/neighborhood, spouse employment, etc.) that influenced their family's decision to accompany or not accompany their Soldier spouse to the Greater Fort Riley Community. Conditional branching was then used to link participants only to questions related to the factors (up to four) that they reported influenced their family's relocation decision. All participants also answered several demographic questions (e.g., gender, rank, relationship status, etc.) and participants who were currently living in the Greater Fort Riley Community answered a series of quality of life questions.

**EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:** Confidentiality was maintained by protecting the anonymity of participants. Names were not collected, so personal identifying information could not be linked to the data. Participants were informed that data from this project may be disseminated to other individuals in the following ways: 1) informing Fort Riley commanders of results from the study, 2) publications in professional journal articles, or 3) presentations at professional conferences. No individual names or identifying information will be included in this data. Kansas State University shall retain ownership of all original data created during this project, and if requested, provide a copy to Fort Riley. Other deliverables to Fort Riley will include project reports, summaries, and other work products prepared by KSU and provided to Fort Riley.

<b><u>Project Timeline</u></b>		
Week of:	Project Task	Task Completed?
2/18/08	IRB Proposal submitted at KSU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2/25/08	*Official start date of 12 week project* Project budget reviewed and approved by KSU and FR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3/3/08	Begin Focus Groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3/10/08	Continue Focus Groups; conduct web-based focus groups, Begin survey development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3/17/08	Continue Survey development and revision (Note: KSU Spring Break)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3/24/08	Continue Survey development and revision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3/31/08	Begin Survey review by FR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4/7/08	Continue Survey review by FR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4/14/08	Complete survey review and CG approval; KSU complete survey revisions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4/21/08
4/21/08	Survey distributed to FR Soldiers and families	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4/22/08
4/28/08	Data collection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



5/5/08	Continue Data collection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5/12/08	Preliminary data analysis to identify groups for targeted data collection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5/19/08	Continued data analysis and begin additional targeted data collection over the next 1-2 weeks.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5/26/08	Continued data analysis, begin results compilation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6/2/08	Continue results compilation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6/9/08	Continue results compilation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6/16/08	Continue results compilation and study report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6/23/08	Complete study report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6/30/08	Disseminate results to FRKS leadership	
7/15/08	Community Review of survey results	

## PHASE 1: SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP DATA

**Date of Focus Groups:** 12 March 2008

**Number of Focus Groups:** 9 (4 soldier; 4 spouse; 1 combined)

**Total Number of Participants:** 86 total participants

### Preliminary Themes:

#### *Family Accompanied Soldier to GFRC*

- The primary factor that influenced family accompaniment was a desire to remain together as a family.
- Issues such as housing, healthcare, spouse employment, and deployment factors were key factors that affected quality of life once the family moved to the Greater Fort Riley Community, but they were not primary motivating factors to relocate to the GFRC.

#### *Family Did Not Accompany Soldier to GFRC*

- The primary factors that influenced families not to accompany their Soldier spouse to FRKS were deployment, housing, and spouse employment.
  - *Deployment*
    - Timeframe for Soldier deployment.
      - If the Soldier was to deploy soon after being transferred to Ft. Riley (within months), many families were more likely to stay at their current duty location.
  - *Housing*
    - Long wait times to get into on-post housing (6-12 months)
    - Inaccurate projections/estimates of wait times given to newly arriving families.
    - Affordability of housing in the Greater Fort Riley Community.
  - *Spouse Employment*
    - Spouse had a good paying job in their current duty location
    - Spouse had a professional position that was not easily transferable to the Greater Fort Riley Community.

### How Focus Groups Informed Survey Development:

- The Focus Groups confirmed that the survey included the appropriate factors (e.g., healthcare, deployment, spouse employment, housing, education, etc.).
- The Focus Groups highlighted the fact that for families that chose to accompany their Soldier spouse to GFRC, the primary factor that influenced family accompaniment was a desire to remain together as a family. This item was added to the list of factors.

- The Focus Groups highlighted the need to include quality of life questions, resulting in the inclusion of satisfaction questions related to the key factors and Army community services.
- Primary revisions made to the draft survey were to wording and clarification of survey sub-questions.



## PHASE 2: SUMMARY OF SURVEY DATA

Date Survey Opened and Distributed to Fort Riley Participants: 22 April 2008

Date Survey Closed: 29 May 2008

Number of Participants at Survey Close: 1609

Number of Participants Omitted (no data, Soldiers who indicated single marital status, questionable response sets): 153

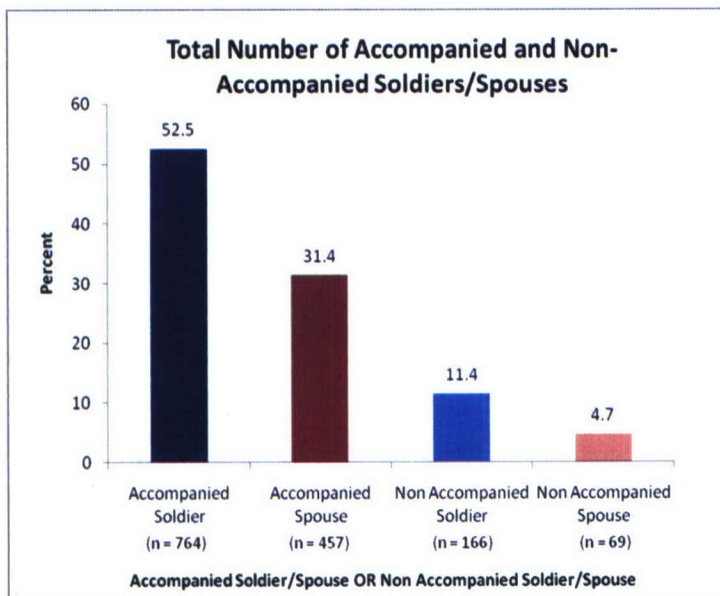
**FINAL NUMBER OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS IN ANALYSIS: 1456**

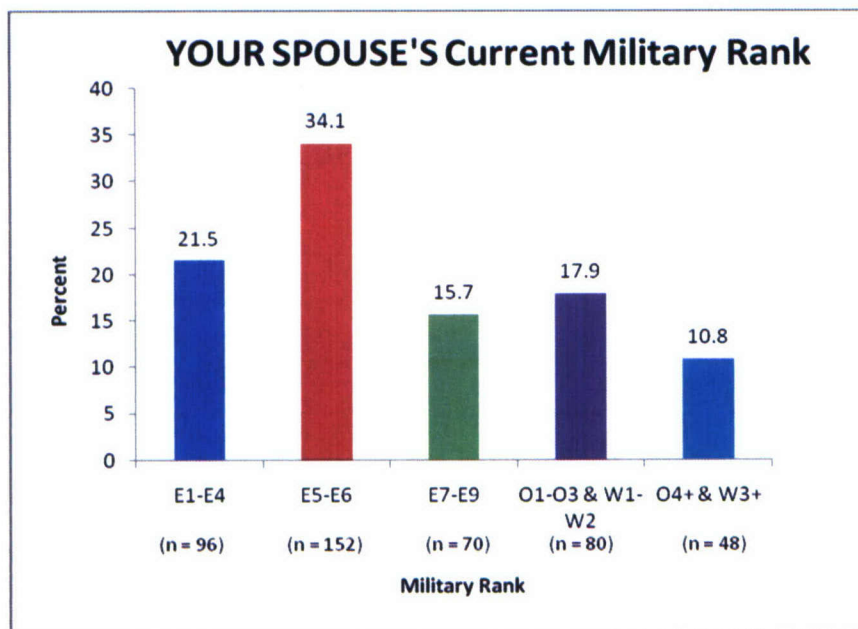
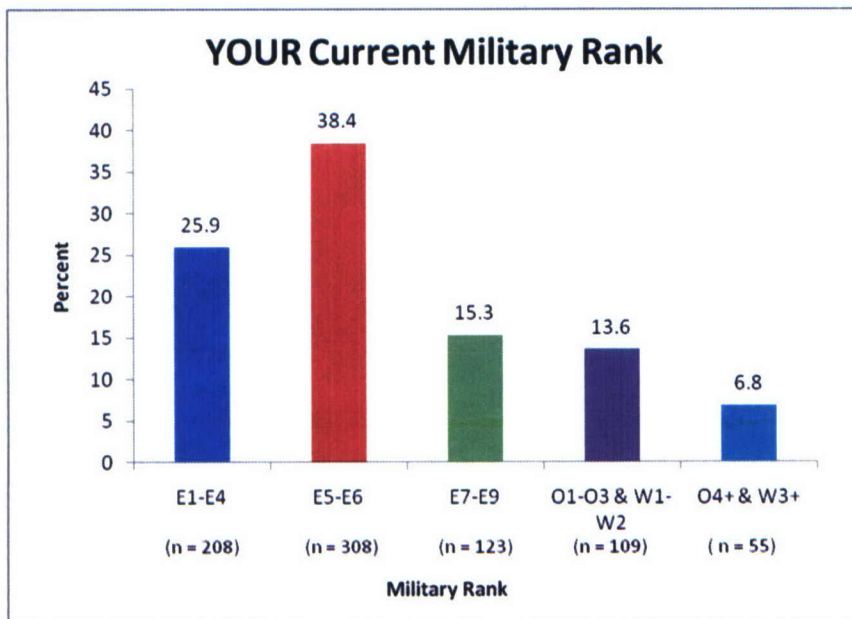
### Demographic Data

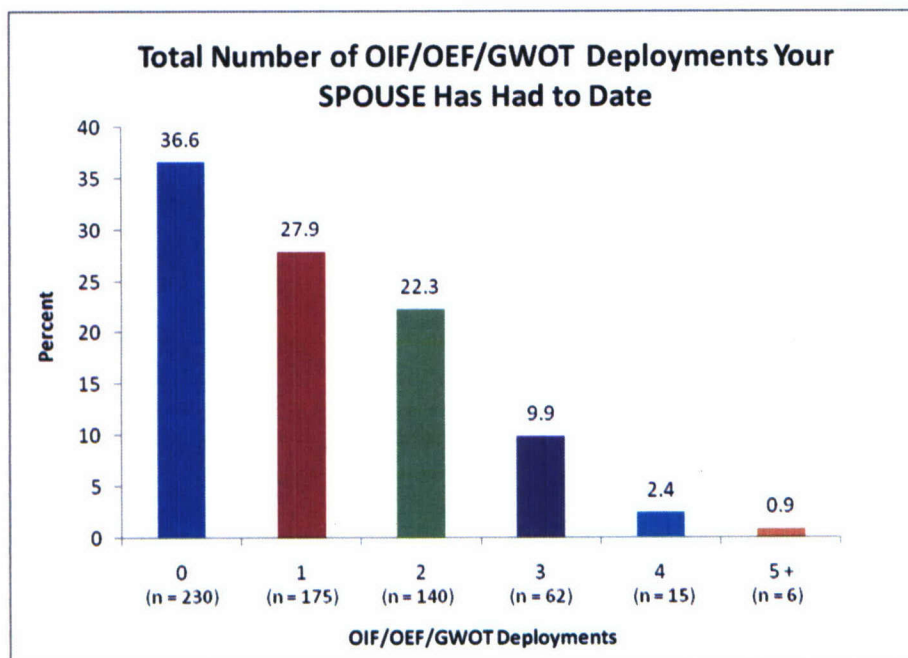
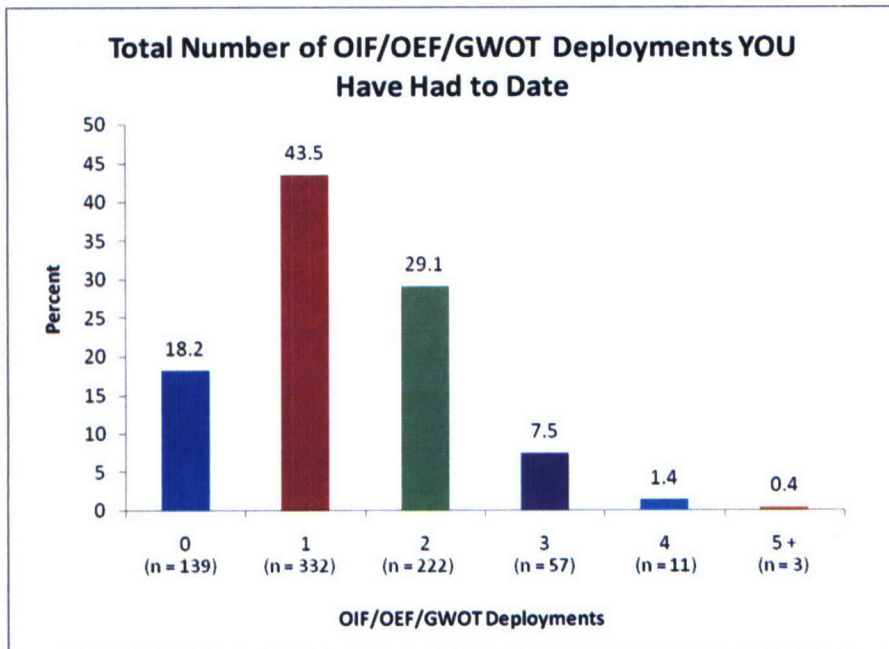
Male Respondents = 698 (58.7%)

Female Respondents = 491 (41.3%)

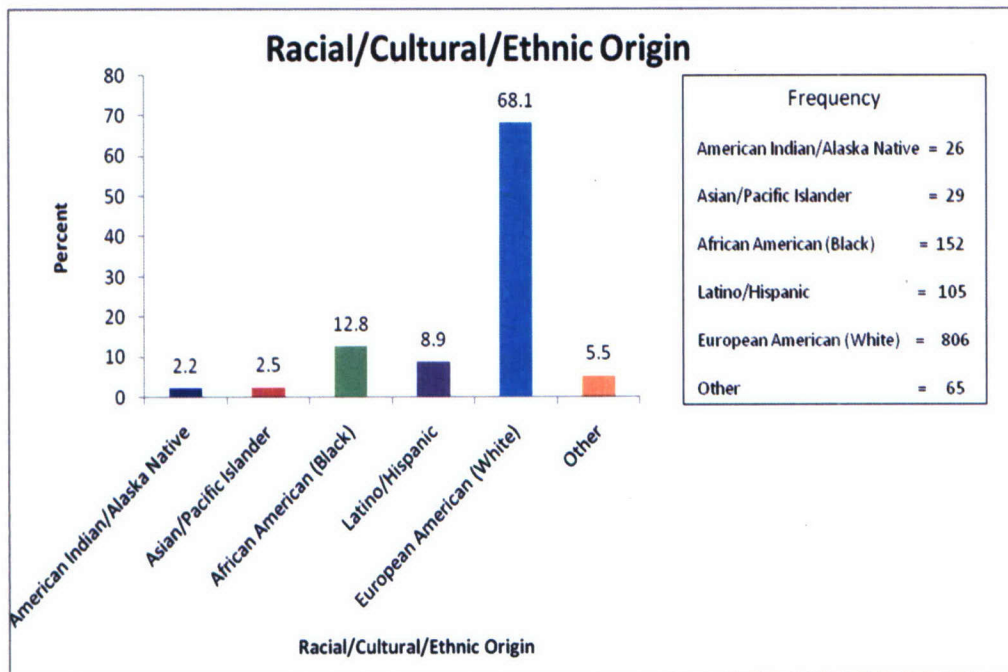
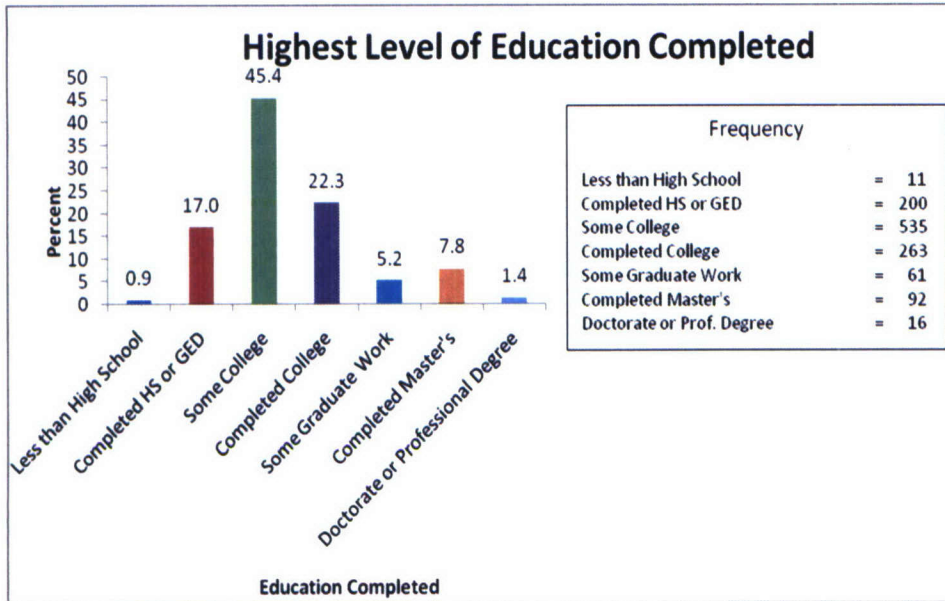
Average Age of Participants: 31.49 (*SD* = 7.70; Range = 17-59)

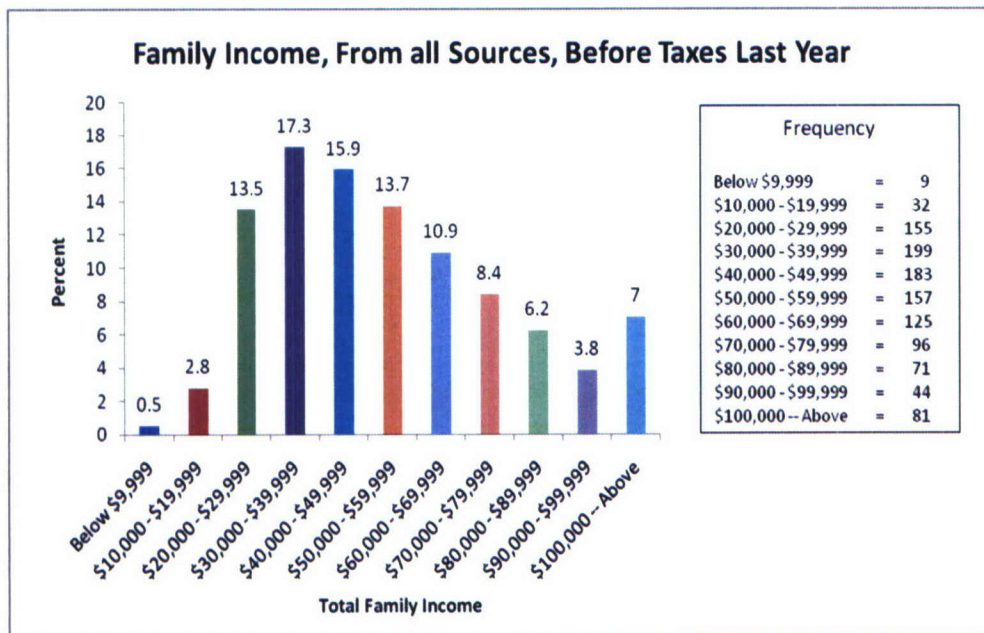
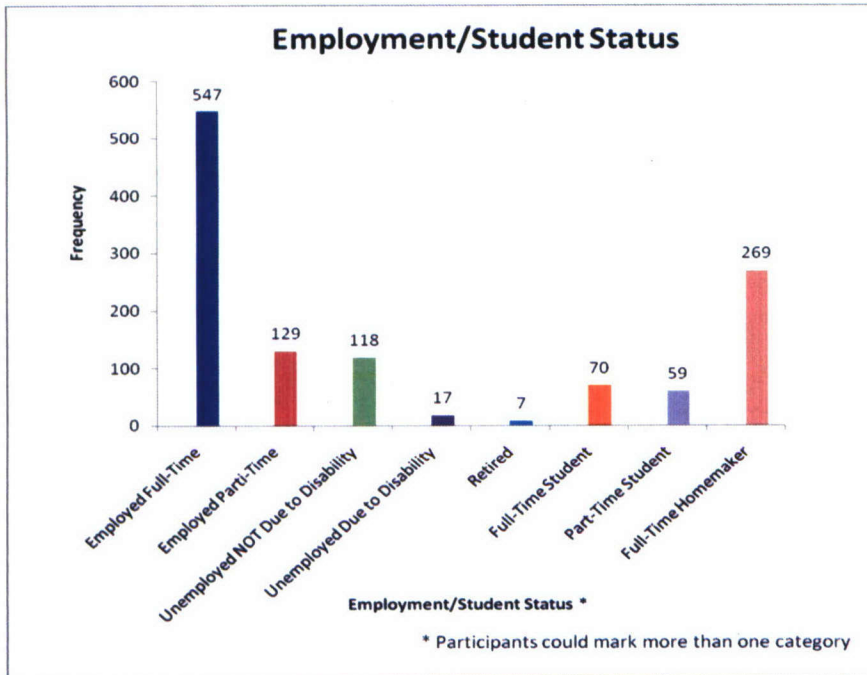


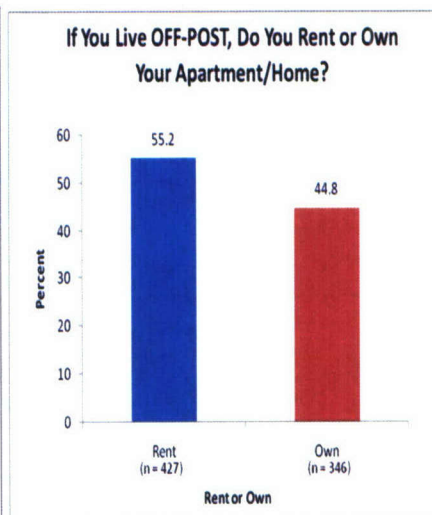
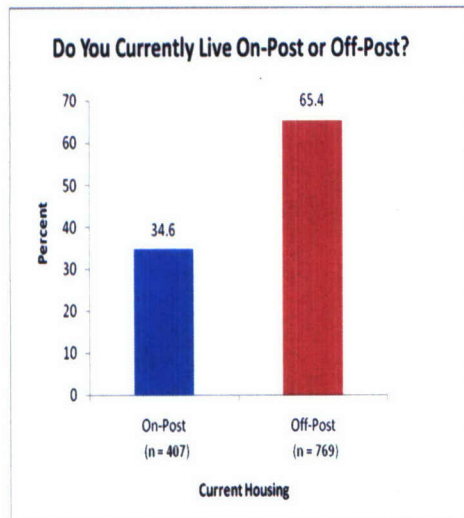
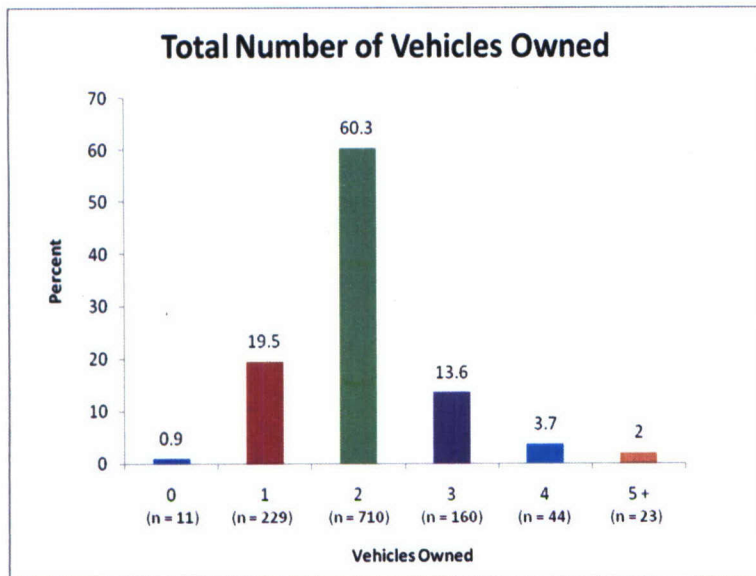


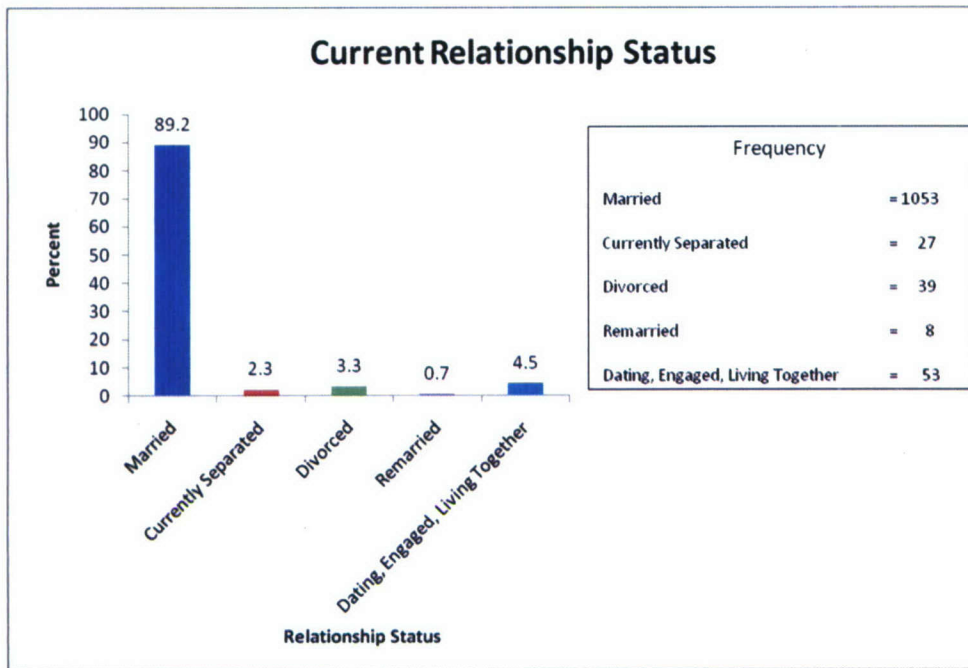










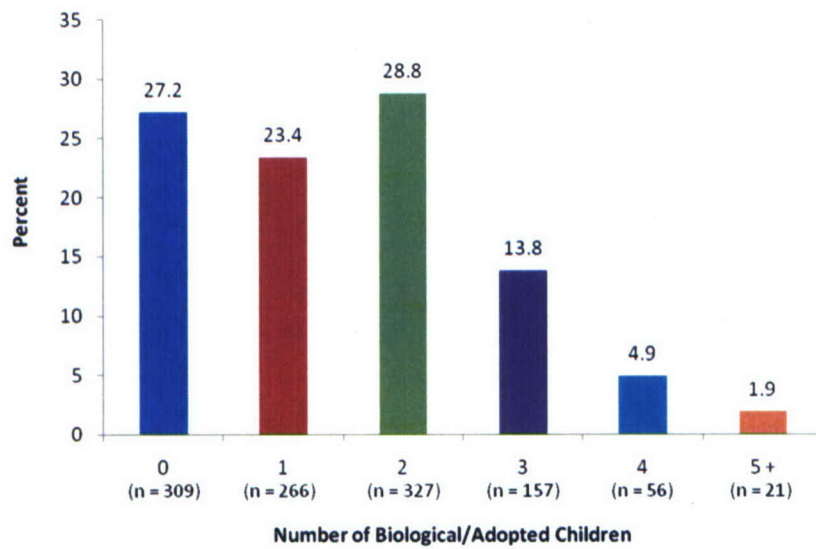


Average Length of Relationship = 8.01 years ( $SD = 6.27$ ; Range = <1 – 39)

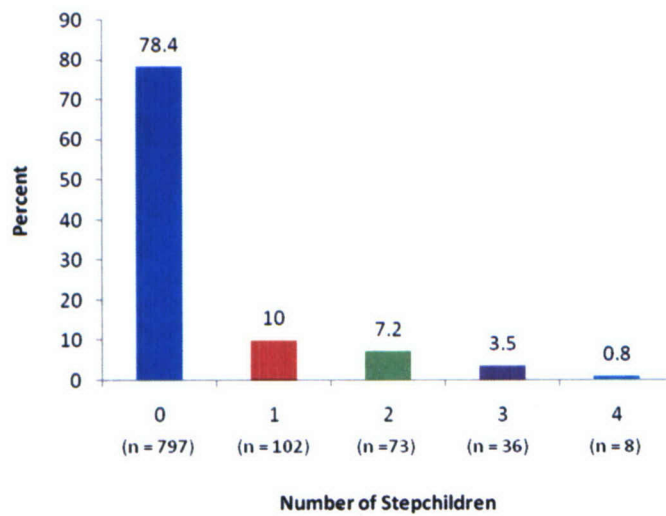
74.3% of participants had been married only one time

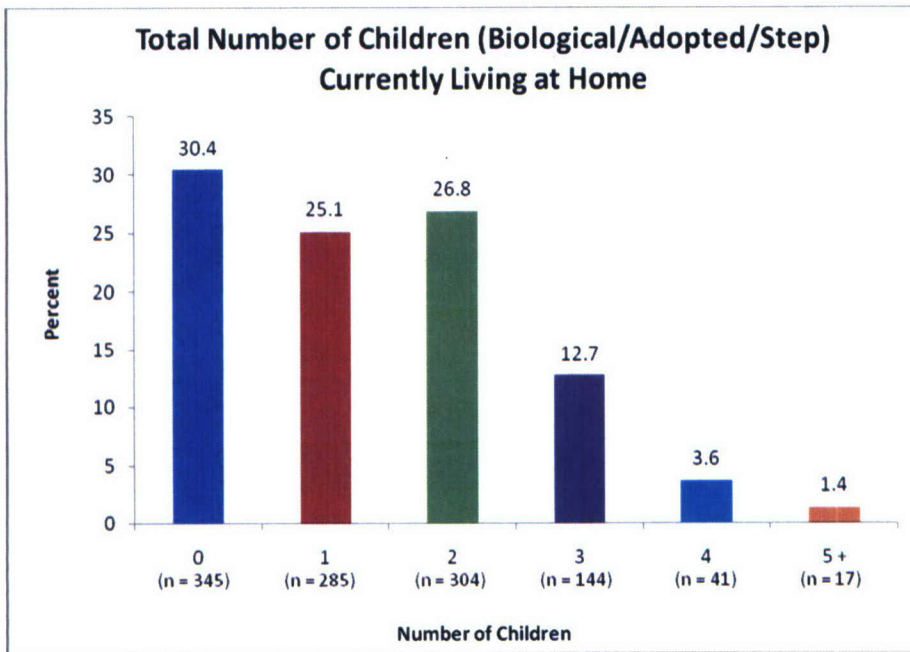


### Total Number of Biological/Adopted Children



### Total Number of Stepchildren





## Soldier & Spouse Responses: Accompanied to Fort Riley

### Soldier & Spouse Response Data

Total: 1221 respondents

Soldier [764] / Spouse [457]

#### Overview of Findings:

The results of the survey show that Wanting to Remain Together as a Family (53.8%) was the most frequently cited reason for choosing to relocate to the Greater Fort Riley Community. Nearly half of all participants (48.6%) reported that this was the only factor that influenced their decision to relocate. In addition, this factor was an even more important influence for spouses (65.4%) than it was for Soldiers (46.7%). Housing/Neighborhood Factors (27.3%), Deployment Factors (23.2%), Employment of Spouse (16.5%), and Educational Opportunities for Spouse/Children (14.8%) rounded out the top 5 most influential factors. Within Housing/Neighborhood factors, the availability and quality of on-post housing and off-post rentals were the main areas of influence. For Deployment, having some time between relocation and deployment and expecting to remain at FRKS for some time after deployment were influencing factors related to deployment. Therefore, it seems that for the majority of families, the main factor that influenced their relocation to the Greater Fort Riley Community was their desire to remain together as a family. Once they arrived, the other factors influenced their quality of life and relative happiness with their relocation.

#### Survey Directions:

*We are interested in understanding the key factors in whether Families accompanied or did not accompany Soldiers to the Greater Fort Riley Community. Several possible factors are listed below that may have been part of the decision your Family made. Although all of the factors may be important to you, please mark the **TOP FOUR (4)** factors that were **MOST IMPORTANT** in the decision for your Family to move or not move to the Greater Fort Riley Community. You will be asked for additional specific information related to the **FOUR (4)** factors you identify, including whether they were positive factors or barriers to your decision. Also, you will be given the opportunity to provide additional information related to your Family's relocation decision. If none of the following factors influenced your decision to move or not move to Fort Riley, but your primary reason to move was to be with your Soldier spouse wherever s/he was relocated, please check the bottom box.*

For each factor that participants checked, additional supplemental questions related to the factor were then available to them through conditional branching, based on whether they identified themselves as “accompanied” or “non-accompanied” in the first question. They were asked to indicate HOW MUCH (i.e., not at all a factor in their decision to relocate/not relocate to FRKS; somewhat a factor; a factor but not the main factor; or the main factor in their decision) a list of supplemental questions affected their decision. For example, if they marked “Deployment factors” as a primary factor in their relocation decision, they were asked to indicate how much several areas influenced their decision: 1) Soldier will not deploy for several months after arrival to FRKS, so Family decided to relocate to FRKS, 2) Soldier will return to FRKS after deployment for a significant time before changing duty stations, so Family decided to relocate to FRKS, and so on. This allowed the researchers to determine not only the general areas that were a factor, but also specific sub-components of each broad factor.

### Survey Results:

- 283 (23.2%) participants marked “Deployment factors”
- 333 (27.3%) participants marked “Housing/Neighborhood factors”
- 202 (16.5%) participants marked “Employment of Spouse” as a factor
- 163 (13.3%) participants marked “Health Care” factors
- 109 (8.9%) participants marked “Child Care” factors
- 181 (14.8%) participants marked “Educational Opportunities for Spouse/Children” as a factor
- 150 (12.3%) participants marked “Recreational Activities” as a factor
- 107 (8.8%) participants marked “Unit Morale/Climate” as a factor
- 80 (6.6%) participants marked “Family Support Services” as a factor
- 152 (12.4%) participants marked “Other Family Factors”
- 593 (\*48.6%) participants marked “None of the above factors influenced our decision; we moved because we wanted to remain together” as their ONLY answer to this question.
  - 63 (5.2%) additional participants marked “None of the above...” but they also marked from one to three additional factors.
  - Total who indicated “Desire to Remain Together as a Family” as a factor = 656 (53.8%)

\*Only this percentage reflects a true percentage of the population. Nearly half of the participants marked “None of the above” as the only factor that



influenced their decision to relocate to GFRC. Given that participants could mark up to four factors, the other factors will not equal 100%.

### Top 5 Factors Rank Ordered and Supplemental Question Results:

1. Wanting to Remain Together (53.8%)
2. Housing/Neighborhood Factors (27.3%)
  - **Availability** of on-post housing at FRKS (44.4% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Availability** of housing to RENT off-post in the Greater Fort Riley Community (44.0% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Quality** of housing to RENT and neighborhoods off-post in the Greater Fort Riley Community (42.3% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Quality** of on-post housing at FRKS (42.2% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Note:** Availability, affordability and quality of housing to BUY was not indicated as a primary factor, nor were housing factors at their previous post
3. Deployment Factors (23.2%)
  - Soldier will not deploy for several months after arrival to FRKS (45.2% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
  - Soldier will return to FRKS after deployment for a significant time before changing duty stations (40.3% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
4. Employment of Spouse (16.5%)
  - **Availability** of employment for spouse OFF-POST in the GFRC (50.9% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Quality** of employment for spouse OFF-POST in the GFRC (50.0% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Better salary** for ON-POST employment for spouse at FRKS (47.7% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Better salary** for OFF-POST employment for spouse in the GFRC (47.6% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)

**Comment [CoHE2]:** I think we need either an explanation of the sub-questions (or the survey in the appendix) or else this won't make sense to folks. They won't know what additional questions were options and therefore, non-factors.

- **Availability** of employment for spouse ON-POST at FRKS (45.7% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
5. Educational Opportunities (14.8%)
- **Availability** of educational opportunities for spouse in the GFRC (57.0% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Quality** of educational opportunities for spouse in the GFRC (51.2% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Quality** of educational opportunities for children in the GFRC (50.3% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
- 
- |                             |         |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| 6. Health Care              | (13.3%) |
| 7. Other Family Factors     | (12.4%) |
| 8. Recreational Activities  | (12.3%) |
| 9. Child Care               | (8.9%)  |
| 10. Unit Morale/Climate     | (8.8%)  |
| 11. Family Support Services | (6.6%)  |

## Qualitative Data Summary: Focus Groups and Survey Comments

### *Soldier and Spouse Responses: Accompanied*

The following is a summary of the results of the focus group data and the survey comments related to the top five factors influencing family relocation to the Greater Fort Riley Community. A content analysis of focus group interviews and survey comments was performed to provide a summary of qualitative responses in order to offer additional insights of these factors. The results of this analysis are reported by factor and include select supporting quotes from focus group and survey participants. The supporting quotes from participants included in the report were taken verbatim from the focus group interview transcripts and survey database. They are included here to provide “voice” to the



participants' experiences, in accordance with standard practice of qualitative data analysis, with minimal editing to the participant quotes.

### ***Desire to Remain Together as a Family***

Of the Soldiers and Spouses whose families accompanied them to the GFRC, nearly half (48.6%) reported that the *sole* reason for relocating their families to the GFRC was their desire to keep the family together, with an additional 5.2% indicating it was one of the factors in their decision.

**Comment [CoHE3]:** This phrase is inaccurate as written, but I can't think of an accurate way to succinctly restate it—at the moment.

*I moved with my husband because I am my husband's help mate. I would not have even considered making him live and work without his family. We will stay here while he is deployed for the support that only a military installation can provide to deployed spouses. The fact that we are in "the Greater Fort Riley Community" has nothing to do with it. I would have come and stayed if this were Siberia. Don't get me wrong. I like Manhattan, but it is not my reason for coming or staying. (Survey participant)*

**Comment [CoHE4]:** This sentence is based on the focus group quotes, but is not representative of the survey participant qualitative data.

**Comment [CoHE5]:** I moved some of the comments around in order to capture some of the more powerful comments first. Subjective, I know, feel free to rearrange.

*Foremost, my reason for relocating to Fort Riley was to stay with my husband, to allow my son to have time with his father for as long as we are able and to keep our household so that my spouse has somewhere he can come to relax and detox during the week. It is MOST important to me that MY Soldier be able to keep a strong foundation and relationship with his children and with our family prior to any time apart from us. He will be a stronger leader and feel confident in his choices to fight for this country if he has a supportive home life. (Survey participant)*

*We had just got married only about a month before we came out here, so it was really that we had been apart for most of our relationship, so we wanted to be able to be together especially because with deployments like they are, we knew that that would definitely be a factor, so we wanted to be able to spend as much time together. (Spouse Focus Group 4)*

*I would just want to say that if you're NOT where your husband is, it's a lot harder to keep your marriage and your family intact. And that was a huge motivating factor for us to come to Fort Riley, because we did have a trial and we were apart, and I would never do that again. (Spouse Focus Group 2)*

*When I first got orders to come to Fort Riley, I had to leave my wife at the house back in (place) because housing was so tight when we first got here, it took me two months to find a house, and it was during the big boom of '05, what December '05 time frame until I finally found a house... so from October until January, I left my family at a different location and then ended up moving them here because I didn't want to be separated. (Soldier Focus Group 4)*

*A marriage is about give and take. Whether my husband would go overseas or not, he and I both agree that I would accompany him. We took vows for better or for worse, in sickness and health, until death do US part. (Survey participant)*

*We knew my Soldier would deploy a few weeks after we arrived at Ft. Riley, but we believe that WE are in the military as a family. Where he goes, we go. We also knew that he would probably have 12-18 months dwell time after his deployment, so it made sense to make our home here at Ft. Riley. (Survey participant)*

*My husband was stationed at Ft. Riley before we were married, he flew home to get married. We married and moved here. He is currently deployed with [Unit]. He will be returning here after the deployment. I wanted to be with him as much as possible before he deployed, which meant I moved here. (Survey participant)*

**Comment [CoHE6]:** Identifying Information.

*We PCS'd to Ft. Riley in Aug. 2006, 6 mo prior to when my husband was to deploy for a 15 mo deployment to Iraq. It seemed our best option to maintain our family unit that last 6 months was to go to Ft. Riley with my husband. (Survey participant)*

*The no#1 reason for me to join my Soldier (husband) is with all the different units he's been appointed to we have not lived as a family for so long I can't remember..and it has put a strain on our marriage and family ...my husbands been deployed ...this make 3 times ...so I'm putting my family home -est1952- up for sale to join him in hopes of saving our marriage(Survey participant)*

*Regardless of the time allotted between deployments, we will always support & relocate as a FAMILY. We did not have a choice in coming to FT. Riley but we knew it would be more than 9 mos for a deployment. (Survey participant)*

**Another** Soldier wanted to keep his family together for as long as possible because

**Comment [CoHE7]:** If my recollection serves me correct, there were no female Soldiers in this focus group, so the participant had to be male.

his children were going to college soon. The Soldier said, *"For me it was because my son's a senior, and he's going to be going off to college soon. So, it was a little more time to get to spend with the family"* (Soldier Focus Group 3).

### **Other Factors**

While housing/neighborhood factors, deployment factors, employment of spouse, and educational opportunities were indicated on the surveys by Soldiers and spouses as key factors that influenced their decision to relocate their families to the GFRC, the majority of



focus group discussions and survey comments centered on wanting the family to remain together as the main reason for relocating. After relocating to the GFRC, housing, deployment, spouse employment, and educational opportunities became quality of life issues for Soldiers and their families. However, these factors were not the primary reasons families chose to accompany the Soldier to the GFRC. Supporting quotes from the focus groups and survey related to these themes are provided in the "Satisfaction Section" of this report.

## Soldier & Spouse Responses: Non-Accompanied

### Soldier & Spouse Response Data

Total: 235

Soldier [166] / Spouse [69]

#### Overview of Results:

Deployment factors (59.6%), Housing/Neighborhood factors (44.7%), and Employment of Spouse (43.8%) were the three factors that most influenced the decision not to relocate to the Greater Fort Riley Community (GFRC). Specifically, the length of deployment and deploying within a few months of relocating to the GFRC were deployment factors that influenced families to not accompany their Soldier spouse to the GFRC. Pertinent housing factors that influenced non-accompaniment were not being able to get into quality on-post housing and not being able to find affordable, quality off-post housing. This was especially true for those who chose to rent instead of buy off-post housing. Important factors associated with spouse employment were the perceived lack of job opportunities on and off-post in the GFRC coupled with perceived better quality and better paying jobs at the former duty station. Employment of Spouse was an especially important factor for spouse's who did not relocate to the GFRC (58.0%) compared to Soldiers whose families did not relocate to the GFRC (38.0%). Other Family Factors (30.6%) and Educational Opportunities for Spouse/Children (23.4%) were the final two factors that made up the Top 5 factors that influenced a family not to relocate to the GFRC.

#### Survey Directions:

*We are interested in understanding the key factors in whether Families accompanied or did not accompany Soldiers to the Greater Fort Riley Community. Several possible factors are listed below that may have been part of the decision your Family made. Although all of the factors may be important to you, please mark the TOP FOUR (4) factors that were MOST IMPORTANT in the decision for your Family to move or not move to the Greater Fort Riley Community. You will be asked for additional specific information related to the FOUR (4) factors you identify, including whether they were positive factors or barriers to your decision. Also, you will be given the opportunity to provide additional information related to your Family's relocation decision.*

## Results:

- 140 (59.6%) participants marked "Deployment factors"
- 105 (44.7%) participants marked "Housing/Neighborhood factors"
- 103 (43.8%) participants marked "Employment of Spouse"
- 39 (16.6%) participants marked "Health Care" factors
- 38 (16.2%) participants marked "Child Care" factors
- 55 (23.4%) participants marked "Educational Opportunities for Spouse/Children"
- 46 (19.6%) participants marked "Recreational Activities"
- 47 (20.0%) participants marked "Unit Morale/Climate"
- 16 (6.8%) participants marked "Family Support Services"
- 72 (30.6%) participants marked "Other Family Factors"

## Top 5 Factors Rank Ordered and Supplemental Question Results:

1. Deployment Factors (59.6%)
  - Soldier will deploy for more than 9 months (55.0% indicated it was "a factor or the main factor" in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
  - Soldier will deploy within a few months of arrival to FRKS (54.5% indicated it was "a factor or the main factor" in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
2. Housing/Neighborhood Factors (44.7%)
  - **Lack of available** housing to RENT off-post in the Greater Fort Riley Community (49.0% indicated it was "a factor or the main factor" in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Lack of affordable** housing to RENT off-post in the Greater Fort Riley Community (46.8% indicated it was "a factor or the main factor" in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Lack of quality** housing to RENT and neighborhoods off-post in the Greater Fort Riley Community (46.8% indicated it was "a factor or the main factor" in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Lack of available** on-post housing at FRKS (45.2% indicated it was "a factor or the main factor" in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Lack of quality** on-post housing at FRKS (42.5% indicated it was "a factor or the main factor" in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
  - **Note:** Availability, affordability and quality of housing to BUY was not indicated as a primary factor, nor were housing factors at their previous post



### 3. Employment of Spouse (43.8%)

- Better quality employment for spouse at our previous post (67.8% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
- Better salary for spouse at our previous post (63.6% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
- Greater availability of employment for spouse at our previous post (62.8% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
- Lack of quality employment for spouse OFF-POST in the GFRC (62.5% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
- Lower salary for OFF-POST employment for spouse in the GFRC (60.2% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
- Spouse has a career in previous location that was not transferable to the GFRC (60.2% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
- Lack of available employment for spouse OFF-POST in the GFRC (58.4% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
- Lack of quality employment for spouse ON-POST at FRKS (57.3% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
- Lower salary for ON-POST employment for spouse at FRKS (54.5% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to relocate to the GFRC.)
- Lack of available employment for spouse ON-POST at FRKS (50.0% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)

### 4. Other Family Factors (30.6%) (for example, problems with or opportunities for children, financial opportunities, marital problems/divorce, child custody issues, location of extended family, Exceptional Family member)

- Financial opportunities were greater at our previous post (45.3% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)
- Marital problems/separation divorce (37.5% (n = 24) indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC, with 3 additional respondents indicating it was somewhat a factor.)



5. Educational Opportunities (23.4%)

- Lack of quality educational opportunities for Children in the GFRC (41.8% indicated it was “a factor or the main factor” in their decision to not relocate to the GFRC.)

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6. Unite Morale/Climate	(20.0%)
7. Recreational Activities	(19.6%)
8. Health Care	(16.6%)
9. Child Care	(16.2%)
10. Family Support Services	(6.8%)

## Qualitative Data Summary: Focus Groups and Survey Comments

### ***Soldier and Spouse Responses: Non-Accompanied***

The following is a summary of the results of the focus group data and the survey comments related to the top five factors influencing the decision for families not to relocate to the Greater Fort Riley Community. These top five factors included: (1) deployment factors, (2) housing/neighborhood factors, (3) employment of spouse, (4) other family factors and (5) educational opportunities.

### ***Deployment Factors***

A majority (59.6%) of participants reported that deployment factors (e.g., the time until or length of next deployment) were key factors in their decision not to relocate their families to the GFRC.

*The two main reasons we chose not to have me relocate to Ft. Riley are 1.) my career as a teacher was already solidified in {state}, and 2.) my spouse was deployed after being at Ft. Riley for only 7 months, exactly one month after we were married. So it made neither financial nor personal sense to relocate to a community where I had no job, no friends, no family, and a deployed spouse.  
(Survey Participant)*

*My family is comfortable here closer to my family. He was leaving 6 months after arrival so we decided to remain here. With the Army today he will probably leave Fort Riley within months after getting back so why would I want to put my family through that. (Survey Participant)*

*That's the initial reason why our kids weren't here. He got here in August of last year and I just got here like 3 weeks ago, but I didn't know exactly what unit I was going to, and that's one of the main reasons why we didn't bring the kids 'cuz we didn't want to bring them here and get them kind of settled in, have me have to get deployed and then he'd end up being a single parent, which makes it a lot harder on him on things he has to do. And we didn't know where I was going to be going. So, it was just easier for us to leave our kids with our family where we know they are around people they know. And they're safe, and they're taken care of. And we don't have to worry about trying to figure situations out if one of us had to get deployed right off the bat. (Soldier Focus Group 1)*

*Well, I didn't bring my family because when I deployed, once I came here, I was on the (NAME) team. Which means, I was going to be here for about 2-3 months and I would be deployed. To me, it didn't make any sense to move my family from (place), bring them to a whole 'nother place, and then I'm gone, and they're here by themselves trying to make it. (Soldier Focus Group 3)*

*We wanted to come here as a family, but number one, I was scheduled to deploy upon arrival, clearly that didn't happen. I've been here for about two months, so that was unplanned. If I, if we knew that, that I was not going to deploy, we would have brought the family, and I think that, just my guess is that affects a lot of the soldiers, is deployment. (Soldier & Spouse Focus Group)*

*Not the only factor, but my husband's unit could not tell us when the expected deployment date was so it factored into our decision for the family to stay put at Fort [Name]. (Survey Participant)*

*Just didn't want my family here. I was deployed right after arriving to Ft. Riley and the economy here is poor. I feel that my daughter is better staying where she has better education and is away from the military lifestyle. Not saying the military lifestyle is bad but it changes when the Soldier is gone and the spouse is running around crazy. (Survey Participant)*

*Moving is tiresome on family school and jobs are the priority and moving every three years does not accommodate family members. (Survey Participant)*

*Spouse's career is not transferrable to rural area. As well the children were having separation issues due to Daddy being a geographical bachelor and the*

*impending deployment and the opportunity for them to get better treatment for these issues existed in [City]and not Manhattan. The stress of moving is enough with a deployment on the heels and a spouse not happy due to career left behind and children with friends, teachers, confidants left behind makes for an extremely miserable family. All families have issues at re deployment we are hoping that our choice not to move will lessen those effects on our children, though we know our marriage suffers everyday that we are a part of the Army. (Survey Participant)*

### **Housing/Neighborhood Factors**

While some Soldiers and Spouses reported relatively few problems with on- and off-post housing, approximately 44.7% reported that housing and neighborhood factors influenced their decision not to relocate their families to the GFRC. The perception of a lack of available on-post housing or off-post rentals, and a lack of affordable off-post rentals were major themes of the focus group interviews and the survey comments. Specific complaints were the perceived lack of available housing on- and off-post, as well as the cost of housing, which many participants felt was too expensive for families to afford at current BAH rates, even when housing was available. Several participants explained that they were not expecting the higher cost of living in the GFRC, which may be the result of misperceptions or lack of information about the area. However, in some instances, Soldiers and Family members had been stationed at Fort Riley previously, so their expectations were based on previous experiences in the GFRC.

*Like as of right now, we're still waiting to find a house on post. So until we get that, we can't move them here because we don't have the accommodations to keep them here, to go to work, and to have a normal day and be able to get them into daycare and all. Like all the stuff that we already said earlier plays into why we can't have our family here with us. (Soldier Focus Group 1)*



*I have a house in (state), that's why my wife hasn't moved, the way the housing market is all around the country, until my house sells she's not coming up here. (Soldier Focus Group 2)*

*There were many factors that made our decision to not move. 1. My husband was deploying after only being there for 3 months. 2. My mother-in-law lives with us and does not want to move. 3. We are in the process of trying to sell a home close to the base. 4. I have family and friends that can help me while my husband is deployed. 5. We already purchased an additional home in the area where we would like to retire. (Survey Participant)*

*We currently own a home in the {previous post} community, and with the housing market being in the state it is in currently, rather than moving and having a house sit empty due to possible difficulties with selling, we chose to stay here. Along with this is the pending deployment to Iraq and knowing very soon after we relocate to Kansas, my husband would deploy. Our kids would be more secure during this time being in schools and with friends they have already developed, rather than being in a new area with unfamiliar surroundings. (Survey Participant)*

**High Housing Prices—Perception that community has taken advantage of military market:**

*First impressions are sometimes lasting. The cities around Fort Riley have very little to offer my family except over-priced houses and high property taxes.... Home builders are here to take advantage of Soldiers by raising the prices of new construction homes that are poorly built. Older homes on the market are not worth the asking price. Soldiers and their families are arriving here everyday with no place to live. a. Guest housing on post is always booked. b. Hotels off post are usually booked or too expensive. c. Soldiers make rushed decisions to rent expensive apartments or choose substandard rentals from Slum Lords. The Army is supposed to take care of its own; yet, Soldiers are being failed everyday by the Army. The Army can best serve their Soldiers by providing adequate on post housing to all Soldiers desiring it. In the mean time, we're being ripped off everyday. Not every Soldier can afford to live in a hotel until decent affordable housing can be found. The pathetic part is, I see the "We Support The Troops" signs around town. If this is support, I'd rather go back to Iraq. (Survey Participant)*



#### *Expensive Lodging/Hotels:*

*Long term stays at off post motels are unacceptable. I would not advise anyone to come to Fort Riley because of the terrible contract motels in Junction City. I am very disgusted with the housing office and what they consider an acceptable housing plan. We are concerned about the fallout from Walter Reed and recently Fort Bragg, but if things do not change soon Fort Riley could be seen on CNN. We were told that we would be moved on-post...did not happen, and according to housing will not happen. (Survey Participant)*

#### *BAH Inequality:*

*I came from Hawaii where housing was expensive but was proud of what I could afford with BAH. The BAH here is lousy because the economy knows we're military and charges us the full BAH for something that would normally be a couple hundred dollars cheaper than what they rent to us for. Housing is backed up on post and we're being kicked out [of] the barracks because we were collecting BAH but, with that being done we have no choice but to pay over priced rent in the economy because there's a lack of housing provided on post. Civilians are able to pull up our pay stats online and know exactly how much to charge us and its unfair because the housing available off post is poor. We're being forced to pay ridiculous amounts of rent due to a lack of military housing provided. (Survey Participant)*

*With the landlords knowing how much Soldiers get in BAH, they jack up their prices to get almost all of that money. This leaves the Soldier with virtually no money to pay the gas, electric, water bills. (Survey Participant)*

*My wife goes to school at a private college up in (state), and we got a house up there, BAH, I get like about 1050 or something like that, and uh, my house payment is 663 or something, and it's a lot cheaper. (Soldier Focus Group 2)*

#### *On-Post Housing Waiting List:*

*The wait list for On Post Housing was way too long and the conditions of about 70% of the homes Off Post were not even livable. The surrounding area has no respect when it comes to dealing with the military. (Survey Participant)*

#### *Inadequate Housing Size:*

*Although there were homes to choose from to purchase, the vast majority of the homes were too small. Most of the homes that were built, seemed always to range between 1200-1400 sqft. That footage may be sufficient for starting families or small families, but for families that are bigger such as ours or that have older children, the housing that was built was simply insufficient. The homes that were bigger, were of course out of an affordable price range. (Survey Participant)*

*When my husband and I married, there were no quarters for senior enlisted, so we were placed in housing with the lower enlisted, that was old, unattractive and TOO SMALL. Another factor is that my husband and I share FIVE children, yet we were placed in a 3 bedroom house that was only 917 sq feet. We both have shared custody of our children, his children stay with us the entire summer, 3 weeks over Christmas, Spring Break and Thanksgiving, totaling almost 5 months out of the year....BUT since they do not reside with us for 6 months and a day, they didn't count. (Survey Participant)*

### **Employment Opportunities for Spouse**

In addition, 43.8% of Soldiers and Spouses reported that employment opportunities for Spouses on- and off-post were reasons Spouses and Families chose not to accompany Soldiers to the GFRC. A reported lack of desired employment opportunities for spouses appeared as a major concern of Spouses and Soldiers when deciding to relocate or not relocate. Many Spouses felt that if they had a good paying job at their current duty location, they were hesitant to leave that opportunity, particularly if the GFRC did not offer employment opportunities that were easily transferable or as well-paying as their current jobs. One Soldier reported the factors that he and his wife considered when making the decision to relocate or not relocate. He said, *"My wife lives in (city), and she's a [profession] up there. And she can't make that kind of money out here. So there's no point really for her to come out here"* (Soldier Focus Group 1).

*Difficulty Obtaining On-Post Spousal Employment:*

*There is a serious lack of opportunity, both industrial in nature and more professional, available in the Manhattan/Ft. Riley area. Pay is not competitive on or off post. Let's face it the Army does not consider professional spouses in any of their decision making forums. The Army is 35-50 years behind in the fact that they do not realize a dual income family, both professionals, is increasingly the type of families they are getting into the officer grade. The Army needs to realize that marrying professional spouses is a win/win and assist in creating better opportunities for those spouses on Post and make it more streamlined for a spouse to find employment on the next duty posts. I hinder my husband's career and he hinders my career, equally. (Survey Participant)*

#### **Better Job/Career at Home:**

*This and deployment was the major factor. We couldn't sell our house and I just received a promotion at my job; we couldn't afford to leave the job. I looked at comparable jobs in the local area but I was not going to travel 50 minutes for a comparable salary; the travel costs would not equal out. (Survey Participant)*

*I have a great job here, making more than my husband and we can't afford to lose that income. I checked for job in the local area at Fort Riley and they pay 1/3 what I am currently making. (Survey Participant)*

#### **Other Family Factors**

Other family factors were found to influence the decision to not accompany the Soldier to the GFRC. Approximately 30.6% of Soldiers and spouses indicated that other family factors were key factors that influenced their decision to not accompany the Soldier to the GFRC. Other family factors listed in the survey for the non-accompanied group included: problems with children (e.g., school problems, behavior problems, children not wanting to leave the previous community); greater opportunities for children in the previous community (e.g., sports, art, music, after school activities); greater financial opportunities in the previous community; proximity of extended family to FRKS or previous post; marital



problems, separation, divorce, child custody issues; and the desire to raise children in a less rural or more diverse community than the GFRC.

Two themes that were discussed during the focus group interviews were dual military families and legal issues. Dual military families, families in which both spouses are in the military, desired to maintain their family unit wherever they were deployed.

*Well for us, because we're in the same unit, we'll probably end up going together. So our kids are going to have to go to be with our family, you know, either way. (Soldier Focus Group 1)*

Others had legal issues, such as child custody, separation, or divorce, which kept their families from accompanying the Soldier to the GFRC.

*Yeah, it's easier when they're little. My kids kind of go back and forth between here and (state). With my deployments, I get them when I'm here, and when I'm deployed, they go to live with their, their real mom in (state), and they're in like first grade, second grade, so you can still kind of go back and forth a little bit. (Soldier Focus Group 2)*

**Comment [CoHE8]:** This comment doesn't seem to mesh with the sentence above about the kids coming with them wherever they were deployed. I remember this couple. Their kids were currently living with family in another city. What they are saying in this quote, I think, is that even if they choose to bring the kids with them to FRKS, they would have to go back with family anyway once the couple was deployed—so they might as well be with other family members now.

### **Educational Opportunities for Spouse/Children**

Approximately 23.4% of Soldiers and spouses reported that educational opportunities for spouses and children were key factors in their decision not to accompany the Soldier to the GFRC. In the focus group interviews and the survey comments, Soldiers and Spouses reported that they did not want to uproot their children from their schooling, their friends, and their social activities. This was especially true when they had children enrolled in special needs programs or their children were older or close to graduation. In addition, some participants reported that educational opportunities their children were involved in at their current duty location were not offered in the GFRC. Educational opportunities for spouses was also a key factor in not accompanying the Soldier to the GFRC.



There are special needs kids, you can't mess with those guys at all, so that's going to be another factor. You're going to leave them where they're at, and then high school, they have friends and circles, and they're trying to get a job down at the McDonald's or something like that, so older kids of course not. When they're little, it's a little bit easier, but you don't want to mess with a high school kid or college or junior high really. (Soldier Focus Group 2)

**Yeah**, well my husband and I were at (place), and after my husband's deployment to (place) he got out to go to law school, and I wasn't sure if I went to the course that I, "Well, you'll know soon enough where you'll be going for your next assignment so your husband can go to law school there." So, because you have to put in an application and all that, and we didn't find out till about 3 weeks before we were supposed to leave the (place) course on our following assignment, so since I'm ETS'ing we thought it'd be best if he lived with his family up in (place) before I can get up there in August, so that's why he's not here with me. (Soldier Focus Group 4).

**Comment [CoHE9]:** This one is a little hard to follow. (place) course isn't making sense to me, but it may make sense to those better schooled in military language.

#### Not Wanting to Uproot Children:

I mean, that's been a military problem, I mean, for centuries is, I grew up a military brat, going from school to school, so the longer we can keep them in school, and they keep their friends, their social life, the skills get better, so the more they get uprooted, they don't get as much social activities. (Soldier Focus Group 2)

Our daughter wanted to at least finish elementary school with her current friends. There are LD issues, and since there is already a Section 504 plan in place for her at her current school, moving her and starting over with educational plans and friends (when we don't know if our serviceman will be home soon and/or re-deploying soon) seemed too much to tackle along with the fears and anxieties of deployment. (Survey Participant)

Both of our children are and have been in a great public school system for several years now - no need to disrupt/disturb their education because of a PCS. Our Son is a junior at the {University Name} - so it was very important that at least one parent remained in the area to provide him the support and oversight required to finish his degree. (Survey Participant)

#### Educational Opportunities Not Available in GFRC:

Our children attend a private school that is ranked in the top 5% of Kansas Accredited Schools. We did not see this option available to us in the Manhattan

area. As well while K-State offers in state tuition to spouses of Soldiers stationed in KS their educational opportunities are not as robust as the greater Kansas City area with so many schools in the city as well as nearby in Lawrence. (Survey Participant)

Our oldest son is currently in high school and the school that he is in currently is a magnet school. By attending he is getting both high school credits and college credits. At the time of graduation, he will have acquired both a high school diploma and an associates degree. This type of school is not offered in the Greater Fort Riley Community. (Survey Participant)

We have no children so that was not an issue. However, I (the spouse) am trying to finish my college education and find it hard to. At our previous post, I was able to go to one of the top universities since it wasn't that far. But I had only been going for a week and three days when I found out my husband received orders to come to Kansas. After talking to my teachers about letting me finish the last couple weeks in Kansas many denied me the opportunity so I went to drop my classes. Not only did I have to drop my classes but the school said I had to pay them back a little over \$1800 for dropping my classes since I wasn't the actual service member. Had I stayed, I wouldn't have had a place to live because we had to clear housing and I wasn't around any family or friends that I could stay with. Since then, I have not been able to start my classes again because of the fear that we might have to pick up and leave again. If the military would offer to help correct issues like that (like paying for the school charges caused by our relocation), it would be easier for people like me to feel comfortable going anywhere with their service member knowing that they can work on their education. (Survey Participant)

Fort Riley Middle School. While the staff is generally a decent staff, I do not feel they have completely identified nor addressed the current social problems of dealing with military teens. Specifically, while civilian teenagers learn to handle common age social situations and navigation of those situations, military teens have the "deployment multiplier" on those issues. I don't feel that the staff of FRMS truly recognizes it but rather approaches each school year as "business as usual" type of mentality or attitude. (Survey Participant)



## Satisfaction Questions: Areas Related to Army Life and Life in the Greater Fort Riley Community

### Survey Results

#### Overview of Results:

Seventeen questions were included to gauge participants' level of satisfaction with several areas related to Army life and life in the Greater Fort Riley Community. In essence, these results show the level of satisfaction that participants have with the services, opportunities, and lifestyle that is offered in the GFRC now that they have relocated to the GFRC. Participants are generally satisfied with family support services (though as will be discussed in the next section, a significant number of participants either do not utilize family support services or do not know about them), unit morale/climate, recreation on and off-post, off-post educational opportunities for children/spouse, and off-post healthcare. Participants are generally dissatisfied with on post healthcare and child care, on and off post employment opportunities for spouse and on and off post housing.

#### Survey Directions:

*We would also like to identify areas where Soldiers and Family members are satisfied related to their time at Fort Riley. The same factors may not have influenced your decision to relocate or not relocate to the Greater Fort Riley Community, but they may greatly affect your experience with and impression of the Greater Fort Riley Community. Thus, they may be factors that affect your quality of life and satisfaction with FRKS or the Greater Fort Riley Community. Please indicate your level of SATISFACTION with the following areas related to the Greater Fort Riley Community.*

The following list represents the areas where participants were "Most Satisfied" and "Least Satisfied" with their experiences with FRKS and the GFRC (% Satisfied or Dissatisfied). Note that these results are based on the percentage of participants who were satisfied (i.e., "slightly satisfied," "satisfied," and "extremely satisfied") or unsatisfied (i.e., "slightly dissatisfied," "dissatisfied," or "extremely dissatisfied") and do not include those who were "neutral." Therefore, the order is slightly different than when using the average score to rank the quality of life areas.

**Most Satisfied Areas:**

- Family Support Services = 51.2%
- Recreational Activities Off-Post = 50.2%
- Educational Opportunities for Spouse Off-Post = 48.1%
- Health Care Off-Post = 46.9%
- Educational Opportunities for Children Off-Post = 46.2%
- Unit Morale/Climate = 43.6%
- Recreational Activities On-Post = 42.3%

**Least Satisfied Areas:**

- Housing/Neighborhood Factors ON-POST = 54.0%
- Health Care Factors ON-POST = 46.4%
- Housing/Neighborhood Factors OFF-POST = 44.7%
- Employment of Spouse ON-POST = 42.5%
- Deployment Factors = 41.1%
- Employment of Spouse OFF-POST = 40.0%
- Child Care ON-POST = 37.9%

**Rank order of Least to Most Satisfied Areas (1 = Extremely Dissatisfied; 7 = Extremely Satisfied):**

1. Housing/Neighborhood Factors ON-POST (Average = 3.31)
2. Deployment Factors (Average = 3.54)
3. Employment of Spouse ON-POST (Average = 3.63)
4. Health Care Factors ON-POST (Average = 3.70)
5. Child Care Factors ON-POST (Average = 3.72)
6. Housing/Neighborhood Factors OFF-POST (Average = 3.72)
7. Other Factors (Average = 3.74)
8. Employment of Spouse OFF-POST (Average = 3.76)
9. Child Care Factors OFF-POST (Average = 3.91)
10. Unit Morale/Climate Factors (Average = 4.05)
11. Recreational Activities ON-POST (Average = 4.14)
12. Educational Opportunities for Children ON-POST (Average = 4.36)
13. Recreational Activities OFF-POST (Average = 4.41)
14. Health Care Factors OFF-POST (Average = 4.45)
15. Family Support Services (Average = 4.50)
16. Educational Opportunities for Children OFF-POST (Average = 4.55)
17. Educational Opportunities for Spouse OFF-POST (Average = 4.64)



## Qualitative Data Summary: Focus Groups and Survey Comments

**Comment [CoHE10]:** Maybe we should start with the Satisfied areas before moving to the dissatisfied? Just a thought.

### Areas of Satisfaction with the GFRC

#### Army Support During Deployment:

*This is our first deployment. We are also new to the Army so as a spouse, a mother and a new Army wife I wanted to try to establish more concrete relationships with other families enduring our same sacrifices to learn how they cope or have dealt with the experience. I wanted to establish a support center of my own if we decided to stay at Ft. Riley during the deployment. (Survey Participant)*

*We felt it was important for us to stay together as a family and I personally felt it was necessary to stay near Fort Riley as a representative for my husband while he was deployed. We liked Kansas because it was closer to our family who live in the Midwest and Kansas had better schools than our previous post. (Survey Participant)*

*I wanted to be around women going through the same situation that I would be in, and not be coddled by my family at home. (Survey Participant)*

*My husband loved the unit. They were cohesive and looked out for one another. We came from a unit that did not care about the welfare of the family. From what my husband saw, Ft Riley is a great place for friends and family to be together. (Survey Participant)*

#### Community Support/Friendliness:

*We knew my husband would deploy shortly after moving to Ft. Riley. It was important to us to be in a military community where they had support services for family members of deployed soldiers. (Survey Participant)*

*We decided to come here because we knew some of the people in the unit and it made us more comfortable knowing that we could deploy with people we know as opposed to deploying with people that we didn't know. (Survey Participant)*

*We were happy to have not only nature activities but community support activities such as parades, parks and rec. for kids, mall trick-treats, schools are great and have lots of activities too. (Survey Participant)*

*I think the area is beautiful. The sunsets are extraordinary. It would be nice if there were better access to shopping, restaurants, and entertainment. On the other hand, there is not much traffic, the area does not seem overcrowded (as long as you stay away from Wal-Mart and the Commissary on pay days). It seems like a quiet area. I wouldn't deliberately live here, but it's not so bad (Survey Participant)*

*The communities are small, less crime. For recreation there are a lot to do for the outdoor types. Kansas is a beautiful state and I believe it is a good place to raise a family. (Survey Participant)*

*I think the best thing about this area is the people. All of the local people are very nice. I work in healthcare and I feel that people are actually getting quality services vs. where I come from in (state). Also the education system is fantastic. They are in the top % in the nation. I think it is a great place to raise a family. (Survey Participant)*

**Comment [CoHE11]:** This would have been covered earlier.

*The amount of great activities offered and family days and apple days and chances for the kids to learn about safety and climb on fire, police, ambulance, military equipment.... chances to see what daddy does as well as rec activities. The unit morale and acceptance of family is great on post and the community has many more things to do also. We are extremely happy with the Riley County schools and what they have to offer! Manhattan offers so many community events and community shops and rec opportunities!!! (Survey Participant)*

*Small town feel - local parks (Konza) and lakes; lack of traffic (we came from [City]). Local folks are very nice and friendly. (Survey Participant)*

*We like the Ks area and the lack of crime in the area. We do feel that our children, house, and belongings are safe. We enjoy our church and friendships that we have built from it. (Survey Participant)*

*Fort Riley is quiet and safe - a nice place to raise children. There are many low-cost or free family related activities that are available - you just have to put some time and effort into finding out what those activities are. (Survey Participant)*

*Our previous location was in an over crowded area too urban and we wanted a rural, calm community spirit with a small home town feel. The schools were too crowded and our kids were numbers in a large school and we wanted them to have more individual attention and have a small town feel with a community that supports the military! (Survey Participant)*

*We hated the weather at (Name of Fort). I knew I was going to need help from my family if I was to finish my schooling. We just love this area! Friendly Community and they used to be very military friendly. But I guess with the shape our economy is in and the greed that business owners, real estate owners, and local government officials feel when they hear the military is getting raises to try to finally give the Army competitive wages is just too overwhelming for anyone to be affordable. (Survey Participant)*

*We had lived in the Ft. Riley area previously, we enjoyed Manhattan, and the energy of a college town, and the sports, arts and events related to KSU. We like the city conveniences in with a small town feel, and loved our former church and neighbors, and were looking forward to reconnecting with our friends here. The position my husband had here was a good one, and a challenge he was looking forward to. (Survey Participant)*

*Again the small town community involvement with a lot of activities for adults and children. lots of nature outdoor activities as well as culture, holiday fun, parks and great schools and school opportunities. Manhattan offers so much for the family and supports the military. Also the commute to ft riley is stress free. Ft Riley also offers a lot for the family so we have the best of both worlds with activities on and off Ft. Riley it make for a great mix with a small town feel. (Survey Participant)*



*The Fort Riley Community has been more welcoming and helpful than expected. When I first moved here with my Soldier I felt like I was in the middle of nowhere and a little lost. But the FRG, Ft. Riley community related websites, and other on base services have really helped me understand the military way of life as a spouse of a soldier. Ft. Riley has a lot of people that are very helpful whether it's through services run by the base or just being interactive with other military spouses. I have never lived outside my hometown and moving to a whole different state was scary. But after some time and with the help on base and off, we have made friends and made a way of life that was acceptable and comfortable. Since my main reason for moving to the Ft. Riley area was to be with my Soldier I would do it again, with or without children. Living here was a nice experience even though it is not exactly what we're looking for in future plans (Survey Participant)*

*I was very pleased with how clean the post was. The outside park and activities were wonderful. Also the Manhattan community was very friendly and I like the atmosphere of the community. The Post Exchange was very clean and well stocked. (Survey Participant)*

*Loved our church, loved how quick it was to get places, loved our toddlers preschool, love the library and the different programs they had for little kids, loved the counties free service for families where you could take your children indoors to play year round Monday through Friday. Loved all the little parades. Loved the communities huge support and thankfulness of the military. (Survey Participant)*

*The people who live in Kansas - or at least in our area of it - are the nicest people in the world. It is amazing to experience their genuine interest and concern. Looking back over our time here, I can't think of even one bad or uncomfortable experience with anyone in the community. Honesty, helpfulness, integrity, kindness - I just can't say enough good about them all. Truly remarkable people. (Survey Participant)*

*Fort Riley overall (Army leaders, installation agencies, etc) are very proactive in their support for Soldiers and Families, and generally not stuck in the "route of least resistance" routine, going for the easy answer rather than what's right; this isn't necessarily the case on other installations. The surrounding communities are genuinely supportive and appreciative of Fort Riley's Soldiers and actively provide tangible help and include us in their communities; also not necessarily the case on other installations. (Survey Participant)*

*The Manhattan Community - they have befriended us, helped my family greatly during our transition to Kansas, very friendly community. I am employed by K-State which offers many job opportunities for such a small town; the college community has been a blessing since we are living above our means in terms of BAH/Utilities/Gas, etc. due to the lack of housing on-post when we arrived. (Survey Participant)*

*It's, it's a lot different, but the people are nicer. That's one thing I could say. The people are a lot nicer generally speaking than (city), and they drive a lot nicer. (Spouse Focus Group 4)*

*The people living around here are really pretty nice. Especially, I work for a lot of the farmers around here, and most of them are really nice and do just about anything for you. It's a good community... I actually thought about retiring here. Just the housing market is the only thing*

*that pushed me out. The people here are really nice, they'd do just about anything for you, so that's one thing I can say that's good about the community." (Soldier Focus Group 4)*

*The community support is overwhelming. Both Manhattan and Junction City go out of their way to cater to the military by offering a huge variety of things to do, and by offering military discounts. They show support with signs and gratitude; without the community's support, many of us would choose to leave or not be here at all. (Survey Participant) The off post community support within Manhattan and Junction City. The Military Affairs Council in both of these cities and many of the businesses are striving to reach out and meet the needs of Army Family Members. The community response to build more housing is wonderful— despite the ebbing flow of Soldiers due to the OPTEMPO. (Survey Participant)*

#### **Available Recreation and Activities:**

Throughout the focus group and surveys interviews, Soldiers and spouses often commented on the recreational activities offered in the GFRC. There appears to be mixed views on recreational activities such that some are satisfied with the recreational activities that the GFRC has to offer and others are not satisfied with the recreational activities. The variety of recreational activities for families and the cost of these activities were themes that emerged during the discussions. One spouse was satisfied with the inexpensive activities that her children could participate in, stating that, *"Pool's good, movie theater... nice and cheap... especially with five kids (laughing)"* (Spouse Focus Group 1). Others were satisfied with the variety of recreational activities in the GFRC.

*Equipment rental office and the amount of outdoor recreation opportunities on post, specifically hunting and fishing. I was very pleased to see the ATV riding area open and I hear rumors of a on post trap and skeet club, which would be fantastic! (Survey Participant)*

*There is so much to do off-post. Lakes, parks, activities related to KSU that are cheap or free such as concerts and the bug zoo. Also, the school system in Manhattan is good and it is a very safe community. (Survey Participant)*

*The abundance of outdoor activities and experiences to be had. The post CSM recently spoke to us about the opening of a lake front recreation area. More activities such as this would improve the on-post rec opportunities and maybe keep more Soldiers from finding trouble in Manhattan. (Survey Participant)*

*I think one of the good things, too, that makes people want to come here if they're like outdoors kind of guy, you know, like fishing, hunting, all that stuff, that does draw people. Me, I know a lot of guys that go fishing, hunting, all that stuff, so it's a big attraction for guys. (Soldier Focus Group 2)*



*There's a lot to do for families here. All in Junction City, up in the Flint Hills. We did a lot of research before we came just to find out if there were things to do for our kids, who are real [teaming young?] boys. There seems to be a lot to do for families. (Soldier Focus Group 1)*

*The one thing that I like about this place is that we have an Outdoor Recreation Center that has so many great ideas that even adults can enjoy if they don't have kids. We've been fishing at one of the on base lakes and we've been to the museums. And, we were able to go camping for our anniversary at the state park off-post and we plan to go for our 2nd anniversary in about 1 1/2 months. (Survey Participant)*

*I'm an outdoors person and so is my wife, so Ft. Riley pretty much has everything I need and enjoy in the surrounding communities. We love to hunt, fish, camp and various other things. We plan on going to a K State game one of these days. And we also love to go to the driving ranges in Manhattan, play mini golf, and actually play golf from time to time. (Survey Participant)*

*The hunting and fishing in the Ft Riley area is among the best in the military. Although the post does not have any facilities that promote the outdoorsman. Most posts have Rod & Gun clubs or lodges which provide another venue for families and units to gather and enjoy functions. (Survey Participant)*

*I like that there is plenty of sports on post for the elementary kids. (Survey Participant)*

### **Educational Opportunity Factors:**

#### *Proximity to KSU – Finish Education and Graduate Programs:*

*One factor is the proximity of Kansas State to Ft. Riley. At a previous post, I was driving an hour one way for graduate school. Having Kansas State so close is easier on the family dynamics and cheaper on travel expenses. Now that we have children, the quality of available school districts is a factor but not the only one. As the kids get older, education for the kids will become much more important to us. (Survey Participant)*

*K-State happens to offer a wonderful Masters program in my area of interest. In state tuition offered to military spouses was also important. (Survey Participant)*

*The Manhattan area is wonderful, due to the proximity of K State there is plenty to do and see, also it is within driving distance of my family. (Survey Participant)*

*I am a student at Kansas State University, and I am extremely satisfied with the education this university has been able to offer me. The university, as an entirety, has been extremely understanding while my husband has been deployed. (Survey Participant)*

*Educational opportunities are even better now thanks to the State of Kansas making it easier for family members to get in-state tuition and transfer college credits. A fairly safe area to raise a family. (Survey Participant)*

#### Quality Area School Systems:

*My son was enrolled in special education at our previous location. The school systems here offered exceptional programs for my child and other than being a single parent, played a big part in why I relocated my kids to the FRKS area. (Survey Participant)*

*Jefferson Elementary, in addition to CYS programs, have a good grasp on the concept of deployment and emotional challenges of children. (Survey Participant)*

*FT Riley Elementary School. Excellent teachers and support program for children of deployed soldiers. The support program focuses on age groups rather than having all ages together. (Survey Participant)*

*Off post schooling is exceptional. St. Xavier's Catholic School is income based and allows all families the opportunity to enroll their children in private school. It is a Montessori school and does not care if you are Catholic, Jewish or even an atheist. All children are treated equally and the quality of education is phenomenal. (Survey Participant)*

*The local school system (Riley County) does a fairly good job of providing after school activities for our children and also has an excellent system for adult education. I just wish they could provide pre-school, Pre-K district wide at no cost to the parents. (Survey Participant)*

#### Tuition Incentives:

*We knew our oldest would graduate from JCHS and KSU was local/relatively inexpensive with in state tuition. (Survey Participant)*

*The ability to get in-state tuition for college aged family members and the ease of enrollment and transfer of college credits. (Survey Participant)*

#### Barton County Community College On-Post

*The educational services for military spouses on post through Barton (Survey Participant)*

*College classes on post are convenient and I was able to complete my degree. However, I would like to see more degree options. (Survey Participant)*

*I think the education that spouses can get is outstanding. I think there have been major improvements for the spouses to better themselves with the opportunities given now. (Survey Participant)*

*Barton Community College is the best thing for spouses on Ft. Riley (Survey Participant)*

### Other Factors:

#### Historical Appeal of Post:

*I'm a little surprised that I find it so difficult to answer this question because what I like about Fort Riley is based on the friends I have here and relates very little to the specific location or what is available on post. I do enjoy the historical aspects of the post and have participated in anything that runs along those lines. (Survey Participant)*

*The post is beautiful and has great historical factors that are wonderful to see and learn about. (Survey Participant)*

#### Off-Post Medical:

*The only good thing I can say of the area is that the off-post health care my family has received has been wonderful. All of the doctors have been wonderful and Mercy Reg. Health Center absolutely exceeded all of my expectations when delivering my son. (We only use off-post health care as military physicians are disastrous.) (Survey Participant)*

*Healthcare OFF-post. My family and I have been completely satisfied with our healthcare experience OFF-post. We initially switched to OFF-post after waiting 6 hours in the emergency room and repeated disgust with scheduling for routine care ON-post. (Survey Participant)*

### Areas of Dissatisfaction with the GFRC

While the primary factor that influenced many families to accompany the Soldiers to the GFRC was the desire to remain together as a family, other factors, such as looming deployments, spouse employment, and housing were key reasons that families chose not to accompany the Soldier to the GFRC. However, during the focus group interviews and survey, many factors surfaced as quality of life issues for Soldiers and their families after relocating to the GFRC. The most salient quality of life issues were housing factors, healthcare, spouse employment opportunities, deployment factors, and child care factors.

**Comment [CoHE12]:** I suggest removing Unit Morale/Climate as an area of dissatisfaction. Although 35.9% are dissatisfied, 43.6% are satisfied, which ranks as the sixth most satisfied area.



### **Housing/Neighborhood Factors**

Of the Soldiers and spouses who completed the survey, 54% were dissatisfied with housing/neighborhood factors on-post, while 44.7% were dissatisfied with housing/neighborhood factors off-post. Many Soldiers and Spouses felt that housing in the GFRC, particularly rental housing off-post, is too expensive for many Soldiers and their families to afford. In addition to the housing concerns, for many participants, there was a sense that the community was taking advantage of them by artificially raising the rental property prices.

*They're building brand new beautiful apartments but they are \$1200 a month. Well, I'm here to tell you, as a single mom, I couldn't afford that. And I don't know, you know what all the levels of Soldiers make but I just, from my own experience, there's no way I could afford \$1200 for an apartment. I mean yeah, it's a nice apartment, but you know, you can't afford that. (Spouse Focus Group 3)*

*The housing is very hard to get into on post and to live off post is so expensive that we have had to take out multiple loans to provide rent, food and transportation. Housing needs must be addressed, and off post rental agencies need to be forbidden to raise rent every time our BAH goes up. Our BAH is to pay for rent and utilities and 9 times out of 10 it won't even pay for rent. (Survey Participant)*

*I am very unhappy with the quality of the housing on post. I expected more for the amount of BAH that Picerene gets for the housing we are in. Picerene receives \$1034 a month for a 950 sq ft 2 bedroom apt. The insulation is terrible, we hear our neighbors above us all the time. I hear the alarm clock going off at 4am. I hear them walk above us. I have had the kitchen light fall 3x because of them walking upstairs. When you come in the building it is very depressing, it has not been upgraded since it was built in the 60's or 70's. It does not feel like a home at all. (Survey Participant)*

*Real estate prices sky-rocketed when the entire community learned that the Big Red One would return. Our families weren't a gift to your communities for our service, but rather for our housing allowances... which have been GROSSLY exploited. The real estate and banking industries began salivating once the news got out that 1<sup>st</sup> ID was coming back. (Survey Participant)*

*The lack of on post housing for incoming personnel. If I am forced to live off post because Ft. Riley can't supply me with a house than they should at least compensate me for the gas I have to use to get to work. This is especially important due to the rise in gas prices. (Survey Participant)*

*Fort Riley's unpreparedness with the influx of Soldiers to the Greater Fort Riley Community area. For example, when we arrived here 2 years ago, we were #271 on the waiting list for on-post housing. We lived with a family member whose spouse was coincidentally also stationed at Ft Riley one year prior. We were competing with Kansas State students and Soldier families when looking for a home for almost 2 months, with no help from the military, and settled for a duplex, that costs above our BAH, not including any utilities. Being stationed off post with one car caused a hardship on us considering the drive to and from Ft. Riley (from Manhattan, where we live); being disconnected from events/FRG taking place at Ft. Riley being 25 mins away from post; became pregnant and commuting to and from ft. riley with one car to monthly dr appts. Several Soldiers and their families were forced to live in a hotel for 2 months while looking for housing, causing extreme financial hardships, borrowing money, going into debt. These families had to eat out almost every meal, due to not having a kitchen in their hotel room. \*\*Some families returned to their home state because of the housing shortage, and didn't return. (Survey Participant)*

*I feel that the off-post housing market is too expensive for Soldiers and families to enjoy themselves. Families spend so much money paying rent and mortgages until there isn't much left to spend in stores and local social/recreational activities. Therefore, businesses close down or developers become afraid to start new ventures. (Survey Participant)*

*Cost of living here is high as related to employment and pay. I feel like the community property owners/lease agents are taking advantage of the Soldiers and family members. We pay an astronomical rental fee yet it is hard to get things done around our rental property from our agency. It is hard to get out of a lease when we are accepted for on post housing. (Survey Participant)*

*The system in place used by Piceme does not meet the needs of the Soldiers. When placed on the housing list, Piceme will not contact the Soldier to let them know when housing comes open, forcing the Soldier to rent on the economy. Most landlords in the Manhattan area require tenants to re-sign leases 4-5 months before the lease expires. This creates a catch-22 that the Soldier cannot escape because Piceme will not issue orders that enables a Soldier to terminate a lease to move into government quarters. If the Soldier does not re-sign the lease, then they are forced to move. (Survey Participant)*

*At our previous residence, we lived 45 minutes away from post. As you know, living among civilians is challenging. We had a large house with enough BAH to pay our rent and utilities. However, dealing with a property management company proved futile when requesting repairs. The cost of heating was astronomical. We wanted closer proximity to the commissary and PX, as well as the benefit of not having the monthly utility bills. (Survey Participant)*

*I think that the BAH for Ft. Riley needs to be raised to at least \$1000. The factor causing that is that the off post housing is outrageously priced. It is hard to pay rent with the BAH*



*the way it is right now because all off the off post housing cost's way to much. (Survey Participant)*

*I moved with my husband to Ft. Riley; however, during his deployment I will be leaving Fort Riley. The price for a suitable rental home for my family is significantly more than his BAH. For what we get for BAH, we could only find dumps. Also, I have to travel to Topeka for employment. It is much more financially sound for me and my children to go home during his deployment. The only reason we moved here to begin with was to keep my family together; we are however, considering not moving back when my husband returns mainly due to the outrageous rental costs. (Survey Participant)*

*We are from here and we were assuming that the affordability would be fairly the same as it was when we left in 2004, but unfortunately it wasn't. I should have done more research. I was saddened at the price of housing in the Junction City area, and especially in Herington. I understand Manhattan being outrageous because they always have been. But a lot of the apartments have been erected so quickly that the quality is lacking and are so overpriced that we can't afford to live off post like we wanted. We are a family of 5 and the availability of 4 bedrooms is slim to none on the economy. (Survey Participant)*

*I have been a military spouse for over 15 years. By far, Ft. Riley and the surrounding areas are the most expensive housing that we have encountered. It seems the people feed off of the military family and try to suck every penny they can from them. It's hard enough being a military family but when the finances are in a bind as well it makes it that much harder. (Survey Participant)*

*So I think that's another reason for their spouses not coming with them because okay, say they're in (state), away from a military post, they're getting BAH by location in Fort Riley, which mine is \$1167, but my wife is staying at the house there, say we're paying the renter \$700 a month or \$600 a month, that's actually beneficial for her than her coming out here, me searching for a house and something, Junction City I know has cleaned up some of their slum lords, but they're going to get some nasty housing for \$1167, and that so, a spouse would say "Hey, I prefer to stay here. You are going to deploy in three months anyway. I'll just stay." (Soldier Focus Group 2)*

Quality of housing in the GFRC was also a concern of several Soldiers and spouses. A number of Soldiers and spouses reported being frustrated that they were not getting the quality and space that they were paying for.

*It's hard to believe the quality of how places are built. Like the price that they want you to pay and the quality that they're giving you definitely don't match at all. (Soldier Focus Group 1)*



*I've been in many apartments here, and they're either brand new and cost a fortune or aren't built well, or they're old, and it's just like, there's mold growing inside the building. It's just, around the insulation it's just old. (Soldier Focus Group 2)*

In addition, when families did accompany the Soldier to the GFRC, many experienced frustrations with the availability of housing options, on- and off-post. Participants reported that they were often put on long waiting lists for housing or did not get housing on-post.

*Well, when we came here, they didn't have any housing available on post. They told us it was going to be six months to a year before we could get housing. Well, where do you live in that time? You know, 'cause you can't really get a lease to rent a home for six months. Every rental place you go to, they want at least a year. Well, then if you're name comes up to get housing, if you can't leave, then your name goes to the bottom of the list again and you have to wait, so if like, there's really bad process of hurry up and wait, and if you're not available, well too bad. So you know, housing at the time that we moved here, housing was so expensive in Manhattan that it was outrageous, you know. And so we got a better home for a better price and a bigger yard and, you know, so it was a better deal for us, but the driving isn't always that great. (Spouse Focus Group 4)*

*Well I mean just like the, like me I live on post but the only reason I got housing so quick was because I came from (country) and they pushed me up the list. But people who don't come from (country) or just come from somewhere else in the states, the housing list alone is like 8-9 months long, and they expect you to either stay in a hotel that time or find another place. And like she said, it's hard to find another place out here because it's so expensive and there's so many people coming to Fort Riley at once and there's no housing available at all. (Soldier Focus Group 1)*

*We're technically still on the waiting list, though we'll never get into housing because of the catch-22 of our lease. We battled with hundreds of other families and college students to find decent, affordable housing in Manhattan. Costs were ridiculous for buying a house. Rental costs were outrageous too. What few houses WERE available were trashed, or in less-than-desirable condition or location. We called every available apartment in the phonebook, looking for a short-term lease, but none were available. We finally found something when we hit the letter M. We had to settle for a small duplex, on a year-long lease. Here's where the vicious lease cycle begins. We signed a lease at the end of July '06. In March '07, we were told we needed to secure our lease for the following year. If we didn't sign our lease in March (though it didn't expire till end of July) we would have to move. Post housing could not guarantee in MARCH there would be something available at the end of JULY, so we had no choice. We recently signed our lease again...in MARCH, for JULY. (Survey Participant)*

*Housing would not let me sign up for the waiting list until I had gotten to Ft Riley. I had orders to report to Ft Riley. Is this not an official document. It meant nothing to Housing that I was on orders. The wait for housing exceeded 6 months when I arrived to Ft Riley.*

**Comment [CoHE13]:** This comment is listed twice.

**Comment [CoHE14]:** Comment listed twice.

*If I wasn't lucky enough to find a house to buy I would have had to rent until a house on post became available and then move. Moving is never easy or not stressing to a family. And I know that many families have the same issues with Ft Riley housing. If you PCS to Ft Riley and it is listed on your orders that you are allowed to travel with dependants than you should be able to call housing before your report date. When you arrive housing should have a house waiting for you. (Survey Participant)*

The issue of having to sign another lease four or more months before their previous lease ends appears to be related to rental timelines set in the GFRC, which revolve around the university students' schedule, requiring renters to resign leases despite them being valid for several more months. This creates a problem for Soldiers and their Family members, who may not understand the rationale for this practice within the community and who are unable to subsequently terminate their lease if on-post housing becomes available during that time.

The final theme related to housing was concern among some participants that on-post housing was no longer segregated by rank. For some participants, they were upset that they were paying substantially more for the same standard of housing and that they were no longer living next to Soldiers and families that were in the same "life stage."

*Military, for the most part like to stay within their own cliques. When you start mixing and matching them, there are some issues, especially when problems start to arise. I know that has turned a lot of people off from moving on post. They'd rather just roll the dice and take their chances moving out into civilian areas and just kind of out pricing people that can't afford it...let's say that you're a command Sgt., a major and you have a house and the next thing you know you've got a PV 1 living right next to you, you know a-and maybe he's got, he still likes his loud music or whatever he does and that kind of upsets the (rank), especially if the police are coming. (Soldier & Spouse Focus Group)*

*As far as the housing goes, its not really right that, say that you're an E4 and your neighbor is an E6, why should they both have to pay the same amount of rent for the same, er, why should the E6 have to pay more rent for the same house? Even if all the utilities are included. (Soldier Focus Group 1)*

*I'm very dissatisfied with On-Post Housing for Soldiers with low rank. I've lived in Coyer Manor and was very dissatisfied with the area, even though we lived in one of the duplexes. We should all be treated equal regardless of what rank a Soldier has on his chest. I'm not saying mix the low ranking Soldiers with the high ranking soldiers, but consider the fact of making it a better and more pleasant place to reside. That entire community is labeled as "Ghetto". I have no idea what that term is other than something*



*bad. I've not grown up in the Ghetto so therefore I have no idea exactly what that means. I'm very satisfied living off post and paying my own bills, rather than living in that particular neighborhood for FREE. (Survey Participant)*

*On post housing, I think rank should have an influence on how much living space you get. If you are a Soldier with only 1 kid because your wife has a medical condition that prevents her to have any more kids in the future it is not the soldier's fault. Your BAH gets taken away regardless so if an E-1 that has a little bit less BAH gets to live in a same size house as an E-5 does, that is not fair. I know certain circumstances calls for a Soldier regardless of rank to have a bigger living space to house his or her kids, but I also think rank should have a factor on how much living space you have if you are not blessed with a lot of kids. (Survey Participant)*

*The fact that all BAH is taken for housing with Piceme is ridiculous. A Private can live next to an NCO and pay less. It needs to be prorated. The lack of information for people to know what is a housing issue and a MP needs to be addressed. When concerns are addressed it does not seem like Piceme does their job. (Survey Participant)*

*On base housing lacks the quality of living for Soldiers that have put in the work and time in the military. SGTs and NCOs but SGTs are being located with SPCs and below. Not to leave out the fact that quality of living from SPC to SGT does not change even though the BAH does. If housing receives our BAH does that mean they also get the increase when a Soldier gets promoted? If so Soldiers most likely would want to live off base, I would. (Survey Participant)*

### **Health Care Factors**

Health care at FRKS was also a concern voiced by participants as a quality of life issue.

Approximately 46.4% of participants reported that they were dissatisfied with the health care on-post. Focus group and survey participants reported that accessibility, timeliness, and quality of services were three predominant themes surrounding healthcare concerns.

*But a negative thing I would say is that the healthcare, getting an appointment sucks, and it's extremely aggravating. I had doctors in (city) that I could get in that day, and I did that constantly because I was constantly needing an appointment. For some reason, I had like a handful, I had five doctors literally, and now here, you can't see a dermatologist because they don't have one. (Spouse Focus Group 4)*

*That's just one piece of the bad healthcare, if you call up the, lots of people with deployments have mental health issues, you try to get an appointment right now, it's like a month and a half, two months out, and then you want to go and see them every week. No, that's not going to happen. It's like every three weeks. There's all the woman*



*problems that they call up and need birth control or this or that, now that's another month, so the backlog. From anything from dental to healthcare to ob-gyn to everything like that. I mean heck, the pharmacy, you walk in there, and you're not in this uniform picking up for yourself, that's like an hour and fifteen minutes I've sat there and waited with my wife to pick up whatever she needed, so the healthcare is definitely detractor of quality of life around here. (Soldier Focus Group 2)*

*It seems to me that you get Motrin. They don't seem to believe you are... I don't know, to me personally, it's like "I know my body better than anybody else" and when you think something's wrong with you, there's usually something that says there's something wrong with you, and you go to the doctors, and these military doctors seem to just want to be like [mimicking voice] "Oh no, no", not even taking into consideration what you have to say about it, and then they just give you Motrin. It's just very frustrating when you know something, it's like "I'm going through this, I know something is not right, you know something has happened or whatever that has made me feel that I'm sick or whatever", and then you go and they don't even want to listen to you, so on top of waiting like the 2 hours, you're frustrated, and now on top of that they're not even listening to you. (Spouse Focus Group 2)*

*It seems like they rush you through because they have a million other people that they have sitting out there waiting and so, they don't look at you close enough to, like on post, to really make a good decision about what's really wrong with you. They always say, "Oh take some Tylenol, drink some water and go home and you know sleep it off or whatever." And that's not always going to be the right answer. They're going to have somebody who's going to have a serious problem, and they'll send them home with Tylenol and how's that going to make it better? (Soldier Focus Group 1)*

*I tried to bring my family here, but my daughter could not get in the Day Care because she needed certain shots, and the wait list for On Post care was about 3 months for an appointment. So she could not start school till then. When my daughter did have appointments it was like you had to be there all day. If your appointment was at 10:00 they would not even call you till 11:00. Too time consuming. (Survey participant)*

*Family prefers the freedom to choose civilian health care provider through the TRICARE Prime - Remote Option. Generally speaking, health care and services in this system is more responsive to the needs of the patient. (Survey participant)*

*Irwin Army Community Hospital. Getting an appointment is huge problem. There are never enough and every time I call I seem to hear about some "new" policy that affects my ability to get a timely appointment. I have even been referred to the ER for minor problems that could have been taken care of in a clinic. I find that to be a very poor use of our facilities and services. (Survey participant)*

*The Medical care here is a disaster. The Dr.'s leave and it takes forever to get an appointment. Care is rushed and the facility is old. The staff act like they're doing you a favor and I have yet to have anyone actually look me in the eye and finish a complete*

sentence. There is no time to ask questions of the nurses or Dr.'s. I would say that out of 10 trips in a year or so, I've had three medication errors. I reported it but nobody took any note of it. When you ask at town hall meetings the only answer is " Yes, it's broken and we'll try and fix it". But nothing happens. The quality isn't there. I wait until I visit my family and then I get my health care. I've tried the emergency room but you'd be dead by the time they get to you... I've driven to KC to go to the Emergency room and get my problem solved rather than go to Irwin. I've asked a friend to drive me while I vomited and became more and more dehydrated after being turned away from Irwin with a "just drink water" prescription. There ARE no specialists. Hours to drive for several specialties. The records aren't available and civilian Dr.'s can't access your records either. (Survey participant)

I guess I would have to say I really think that Irwin hospital on post really needs some reorganizing. I'm not really sure what to think about that place. I work off post in the ER and see 50% of Tricare patients. There has to be a better system for getting people seen in the clinic and ways to make appts. Everyone complains about Irwin. (Survey participant)

The medical care on Fort Riley is extremely disappointing. I thought moving to Kansas that maybe my son would have medical treatment to help him get better. I was completely disappointed to realize that my son would never see the same doctor twice on post that the doctors he would see would never know my son's medical conditions so I would have to repeat all of the things that were wrong with my son over and over every time that I took my son to the hospital. I was so dissatisfied with the medical treatment on post I actually changed my medical from prime to standard so that my son can actually have real medical care and medical care with the same doctor whenever and wherever I chose. (Survey participant)

Irwin Army Hospital is a joke, family can not get an appointment in less than a month, the ER is always backed up. I pray everyday that no one in my family gets sick cause although my insurance is great I can not get anyone to see them. This is a driving factor in why I wish never to come back to Ft. Riley. (Survey participant)

In reference to health care on and off post. The service once you get it I say I'm satisfied. What I am not satisfied with is the length of time it takes for the on post and off post appointment lines to give you the appointment. When you call to setup an appointment, they give you appointments between 3 weeks to a month out. Why would I call a month out and say my son is going to get sick. Sickness is unpredictable. ER: It seems like there is no triage system in the ER, like treating persons in the order of the severity of the visit. A 30-plus year old comes in to the ER complaining of sore throat, and of course he is there because he could predict that he would get sick 30 days out to make the appointment. My son, 9 years old comes in crying in pain of almost the same issue, he has to wait in line to be seen after the 30 years old. I see this over and over and over and over again. (Survey participant)



*It doesn't matter if I try to use the Tricare portal online to make appointments, or if I call in. It took me the better part of 6 months to get an appointment to see my assigned doctor. I had several things I needed taken care of, but could not get in to see him. I also tried to schedule same day appointments, but was "triaged" by someone answering the appointment line. Why does someone who has little, if any, medical knowledge, get to decide if my symptoms merit a same-day appointment? My children were both sick, for over a week...only ONE qualified for an appointment. Bless my doctor, he triaged them both and got them BOTH the necessary medicines. There are not enough doctors to care for the client load at Ft. Riley, yet we are not allowed to go "off site" and get quality care. Tricare also provides for "well child" appointments (yearly check-ups) for children up to age 6. I had always gotten my older child in for her yearly appointment. But when we got here, I was told by the staff, "only children 2 and under get this service, we don't offer it for children over 2". This is a STANDARD provided by TRICARE, why does my child not get this treatment? Overall, these are the two biggest issues that most people face. Sitting for an hour or longer to wait for a prescription is ridiculous, particularly when you have young children who are sick. Those of us who are waiting for maintenance medications get exposed to a lot of stuff we don't need to. IACH needs to provide a "cold pack" where we can get simple meds (Tylenol, cough meds, etc) without having to see a PCM first. Many posts do this; it makes life easier. Parents know what kids need; it's not an appointment that is 1/2 hour late, 1 1/2 hours of waiting for meds in a germ-infested pharmacy (Survey participant)*

*The health care on-post is quite simply, broken. By implementing the stringent rules on doctors to try and make more money, or spend less time per person, we have by default denied the compassionate care that they deserve. Quality time spent with a health care provider is needed both for the SM / Dependant, as well as the doctor, so that he may properly identify the 'true' reason for the visit. Instead we are forcing Doctors to make quick judgment calls thus leading to a med dispenser type mentality. This does not ultimately help the patient. More than anything, they need to feel 'heard'. (Survey participant)*

*Pharmacy Lines are so long at the Irwin Army Community Hospital, but not at the CTMC. Maybe try transferring some of the prescriptions down there to even out the workload. Or try Hiring more people to work at the Hospital Pharmacy during the day in order to bring the wait limit down to approximately 45 minutes as opposed to 2 hours.... Thinking about convenience for the families is the most important thing. We have a hard life, living with the thought of our spouse's not returning home, never seeing them prior to the departure due to excessive training and having to relocate all the time. Putting more stress on the shoulders of the Soldier's Families is unnecessary, as they have enough to care for. (Survey participant)*

*The health care on Fort Riley is terrible. You can't get timely appointments, the employees (for the most part) have little regard for the patients other than pumping them through the system, and many of the Soldiers I've talked with about the care at Irwin Army Community Hospital will not approach Customer Service Division like I did to give*



*the hospital feedback about their poor level of care because the Soldiers know the level of bureaucracy of the military health care system won't allow for change... I had to drop my wife from Tricare Prime to Standard just to have her seen off-post for our first pregnancy because IACH did such a terrible job with our first couple pregnancy-related visits. I will strongly discourage military couples with families (or looking to start a family) from seeking assignment to Ft. Riley just because of the healthcare issues (Survey participant)*

*Ft Riley's health care needs to be improved. Soldiers that live off post should be allowed to go off post for care. I went to the ER last month and was told to go to sick call the next day; without being seen by a Doctor. I live 30 minutes away from Ft Riley and that was a really big inconvenience to drive on post for no reason. (Survey participant)*

### **Employment of Spouse**

Echoing the concern of participants whose families did not relocate to the GFRC, those who did relocate reported that spouse employment is an important quality of life issue. The results of the survey found that 42.5% of participants were dissatisfied with spouse employment opportunities on-post. In the focus group interviews and survey comments, many participants perceive that there is a lack of desired employment opportunities for spouses on- and off-post and that there were better paying jobs at their previous duty locations. Participants reported that it is often taking longer than they would like to find a job that is comparable to the job they left at their previous duty location.

*I'd say that the biggest problems that we've had out here was just trying to get her a job that pays even close to a job that requires a bachelors degree in any major city would offer. It's just really hard to find anything like that out here. (Soldier Focus Group 4)*

*I think that was one of the hard things, at least for me, coming out here with him was that I had a job in public relations, which out here there's not anything really like that, so it was kind of a barrier, you know, giving up the job that I had and kind of being in the city where there is so much stuff, and coming out to Kansas where there's not as much stuff. (Spouse Focus Group 4)*

*Yeah, my wife, where I was, my wife had a really good job. She was making more money than she had ever made before, she has an associate's degree, and when we moved here, it took her six months to find a job that could even compare to her old job. There is a serious lack of middle-class employment. (Soldier Focus Group 2)*

*And then the other jobs in Manhattan, you're competing with the college students. You compete with college students for entertainment, housing, and employment. Why hire a*

*military spouse for a good paying job when you got a college student that wants beer money at cheaper price? (Soldier Focus Group 3)*

*I would have to say one of the areas I am least satisfied with is the employment opportunities for spouses on the installation. A lot of my spouses in my previous FRG always had problems finding work on post and had to go off. Through what I have experienced and seen, in order to fully get accepted into the CPOL system it is more about who you know than what your qualities are. From my understanding your resume is first screened by a computer system that is essentially searching for "key words" and if your resume makes it past this step then it continues to go forward in the process. I think this method of hiring is very unfit for the installation and leaves a bad taste for the spouses of Soldiers. Spouses, just as their Soldiers, deserve and should be afforded the opportunity to be employed. Equal opportunity options. I know this is a system the Army uses, but I think it needs to be revamped...Each installation should offer some type of priority placement for spouses who are looking for a job. If the skill set is there they should be hired over a non-military spouse individual. Also, why key words? It isn't fair to a quality, well-written, resume if you have to try and know someone where you want a job at and hopefully they give you some of the key words to essentially copy and past into your resume. This happens a lot. We need to find a way to fully support quality, educated, military spouses with jobs across the installations on our Army posts. (Survey participant)*

*For us there was not a great employment opportunity for my spouse. She moved out here and decided to work on her Masters through K-State online, but I would say the lack of employment relating to her Major, fashion merchandising, almost kept her from coming out here. (Survey participant)*

*My spouse is a pediatric nurse. We moved her here so we could be together, but she had to quit her job at one of the nation's top pediatric hospitals in [City]. I wish I could have talked her into staying in [State] even though that would have meant we would not live together right now. (Survey participant)*

*One of the other reasons she did not want to move here is because of the job she has now. She doesn't like to relocate and start all over again. She's getting paid pretty good now and she's comfortable with where she's at. I don't want to force her to quit her job and she doesn't want me to quit mine. But she's willing to move here because we believe that a family should be together. It's important for our daughter that we stay together. (Survey participant)*

*These questions all cut in the wrong direction for our family. Considerations of family employment almost persuaded my wife to not move to Fort Riley. My spouse had a good job, and employment opportunities are limited in this area. However we wanted to remain together and couldn't afford to maintain two households. (Survey participant)*

*But Manhattan USD or whatever they call it, 383, won't hire military wives because (mimicking voice), "Oh, your husband's going to leave in a little while and you're only*



*going to be here for a while,” and that’s that military bias they have. (Soldier Focus Group 3)*

### **Deployment Factors**

Deployment factors also appear to be a quality of life issue once families relocate to the GFRC. Approximately 41.1% of Soldiers and spouses stated that they were dissatisfied with deployment factors, particularly with inconsistent deployment information or last minute changes (e.g., when the Soldier would be deploying).

*Well, the big one would be looming deployments. I mean, that’s the Army life nowadays. Almost everybody in here is probably, yeah I see lots of combat patches, so almost, we’ve all been deployed, or if not, looking at one, we will be. So that’s always the big question about if your wife comes with you, which they live with you, you got kids or what not, they’re going to come with you, but it’s whether or not they stay when you leave or whether or not some of the guys who don’t have their wives here probably because they knew in about a month or two or within three months of getting here, they were going to deploy. So why bring your wife here when she’s got a better home life, so deployments is the big, how you’re going to handle that? Is your family set up with kids in school here, or you don’t have any kids, and your wife is just going to head back to (state) or wherever and be with her family. (Soldier Focus Group 2)*

*One of the problems is, like the army wanted to stabilize a Soldier for the first six months of his career in one location, but because of this continual deployments and brigades, they have to restock brigades, that went out the window. (Soldier Focus Group 3)*

*I had orders to go to (place), and so my wife and I already kind of made this decision that she was going to stay behind, kind of already had a pretty decent job lined up and she was going to go live with her folks while I was away for a year, so I got word that I was coming here instead, it was kind of like a big surprise, kind of had to change a lot of plans. (Soldier Focus Group 4)*

*It wasn’t known whether he would be with the unit deploying in 2008 or the unit supposedly deploying sometime after fall 2009. So the most important for us was to be together, but I suppose I moved now because there was time to get settled before he was to deploy. We plan to retire here so hopefully we don’t have to worry about leaving. (Survey participant)*

*Deployment and planning. The length of the deployment is hard, but the planning for when they were leaving, was very unplanned, last minute, not giving enough time to prepare and spend precious time with family. My husband was told last minute when he was leaving, and it took us by surprise thinking we had more time, and it made it very*



*difficult. It continues to be a struggle with even coming home for leave, they have changed it 4 times after we have made travel plans etc. and I think the manner in which things are handled are very unorganized, last minute, and cause added stress that could be avoided on the Soldiers and their families. (Survey participant)*

### **Child Care Factors**

Child care factors emerged as a quality of life issue for many participants (37.9%). Participants reported being frustrated by the availability of child care services, in particular the long waiting lists, which require the parent's to sign up their child even before the child is born. Availability for certain age groups of children, as well as cost of child care services were themes throughout the focus group interviews and survey participant comments.

*There's a waitlist for childcare. I had to go and get started for my child that's not even here yet. My baby's going to be born in July. And they want me to go ahead and put him or her on a waiting list now. And then, once the baby is here, then I have to pay to hold the spot. For 6 weeks, I have to pay. Just to hold the spot. (Soldier Focus Group 1)*

*Well you have to register your kid at child services, or uh plural.. kids, babies, and that's when they tell you there's nothing available yet, they told me that I was number 100 on the waiting list. Um, because I had a job working at home, they bumped me up, I have a job now at (place), they bumped me up to number 7 or something like that, I don't know how they did that. (Spouse Focus Group 1)*

*The worst problem there is with daycare is I got a 7 month old. There's daycare for 17 month and older. But, there's A LOT, I'm saying A LOT of brand new babies. No daycare for them, no quality daycare for them. (Soldier Focus Group 3)*

*Waiting lists are the largest complaint. The checks and balances just to see if a child is allowed into a program or not. When CDC is not available there are spouses on post that are certified to watch your child. Some of these spouses should never be around children. The process to become a care provider is retarded and does not truly discover that the individual is fit to maintain children. (Survey Participant)*

*Availability for child care - I put my child's name on the waiting list in May 2007, she was born in July 2007 and in August I updated her information. The daycare said she was number 62 it would be a while before her number came up. They said that they would call me when her number came up. My husband went to the Daycare to see what number she was and they told him that she was number 8, he then went again in April 2008 and she was number 9. My child's name has been on the waiting list for nearly a year and there is still no available slots. (Survey Participant)*

*It costs too much, single or not, every one should pay the same amount. No child is different, and they all get the same care. So that said all children should have the same care fee. (Survey Participant)*

*Child care is way too expensive for a family with more than one child on post and off post. It is sad that most jobs for spouses here pay just minimum wage of \$5.85 and child care is sky high. I think a spouse has to choose whether to work and all the money the spouse is making goes to child care or stay at home. (Survey Participant)*

The following discussion occurred during Soldier Focus Group 2 and provides a critical depiction of the issues faced by Soldiers and their Families related to child care.

**Childcare Discussion: Soldier FG #2**

**(I = Interviewer; S# = Soldier 1, 2, 3, etc.)**

*I: So obviously deployment's a big issue, housing's a big issue, what's another one of the big ones?*

*S1: Childcare.*

*Many soldiers: Childcare.*

*I: Childcare. Tell me about childcare.*

*S2: Too damn much money.*

*S1: And then it, I have a nine-month old and they have this FCC provider thing going around, and I'm very picky. I'm not just going to take my son to a stranger's house and drop him off there if I don't know the person, you know, and they don't have a lot, even the daycares on post are like, some of them are nasty, poor quality, and I don't know, too expensive, I think even the ones on post. They're like ripping the soldiers off instead of trying to help them out.*

*I: So price is a huge issue and then safety and quality.*

*S1: Right, like me, I'm doing the military, and my husband and I are both (rank), so they were going to charge us for my son close to, probably like \$550 a month just for my son, and you know, so I ended up taking him off post where I take, you know, him being an infant, so I save, still it's too much money.*

*S3: I noticed soldiers that are doing military, even if they have a child, or they are expecting, where ETF date comes up, one is determined to get out. Reason why is because they said they can save money on childcare, wanting to stay home with the child and still come out ahead compared to staying in. Some of them like to stay in, but like she said, you know I have a (rank), and her husband's a (rank), and they're paying \$900 a month for childcare for just three children, and they're all on diapers, so they*



don't have to do nothing except watch them and keep them safe. Right? And they're paying \$900 out of pocket, so that's almost a whole check for some of them.

S4: They live on post?

S3: Yeah, they live on post, so what they did and what she's getting out, in a couple months, she's getting out to stay home with the children 'cause they're making-

S5: I've got a couple of soldiers I've got to let go early everyday regardless of what we're doing because the childcare on post, I'm not sure which one they're taking them to is charging them \$5 a minute. \$5 a minute. That's ridiculous.

I: So, one is the availability on post I've heard, they're going to build more centers, but that's still not going to factor into the cost issue.

S3: No, because sometimes you might have to be at work past 5 p.m.

S1: Well, the facilities are supposed to hold, well according to the post newspaper it's around 1200 kids, and they mix toddlers, children, whatever, that's 1200 kids at \$900 or \$500 a pop. They're making a fortune. That's a lot of money.

S2: It is based on what you make, though. Like they were saying, 2 E6s or whatever, it's all a category. If you are a class 1 private, you might fall into that and then all the way up to a class 6, and it's very expensive. So then when you look at, okay the wife's either going to stay home with the kid or go to work, like it's been said, it's a median income for wives, so if she's got a PhD and she can go make money, that's one thing, or if she's gonna go work at Sears, that job at Sears is not going to cover that cost of daycare. So now she's stuck at home with the kid when she really wants to be out working, driving her morale lower. So there's a lot of problems intermixed, but yeah the cost of it based on whatever you make, over \$70,000 a year or something or over \$50,000, so it is totally prorated on price. So and that's my thing, how is it more expensive to watch my kid than it is for, you know, (name) the (rank) over here, and it's like they're both about this tall, both got little padded butts on them. What's the difference there, so I think that they're making it cheaper for them by having somebody who might, they think, be able to afford it, so that's why it's more for those higher categories. It's substandardizing cheaper, making it cheaper for the private.

I: Even if you get childcare, and regardless of the price, do you feel the childcare allows the soldiers or your children, it allows you to accomplish your mission, you can get to work on time in the morning?

Many soldiers responding: No, obviously not.

S1: No 'cause daycare starts at 6:30 a.m., and sometimes, uh, daycare starts at 6:30, and you got to be there ten minutes prior.

S2: You better be on the hill before the hill closes.



S1: Yeah, the hill closes at 6:30 but you might have daycare up on the hill, but you might be down at the airfield. You aren't going to make it there in fifteen minutes.

S1: And then you have to be back up on the hill before 5:00 p.m. because then like the (rank) says, you get charged \$5 a minute.

S1: Yeah, and that really gets, as NCOs in here, that's one of the most annoying things is having a (rank) or below come to you and say, "Sorry, I have to go pick up my child." We're not annoyed that you have to pick up your child. It's just I get annoyed because if this place is sponsored by the military, I feel we're not getting supported through Fort Riley on this childcare stuff.

S2: I think childcare's been an issue for years, so-

S3: You know, our time is fluctuating, you know, he might not get off exactly at five o'clock to go get his child. If something goes down the next day, we're staying late until that is fixed, you know. Until that work is done.

S4: The past three days I've been out on the range, I've gotten home at eleven on Monday, midnight on Tuesday, so-

S5: That's a good point right there. There are those ones where you got to go away for like a week, and it is impossible to always go to the same guy, say "Hey, can you watch my kid, hey I got to go." We have simulators that we got to go to, and they're in like Kentucky or something, so you're constantly leaving for a week at a time, and it's daycare on their terms. These are the hours, if you want to use us, use us, but that's the only thing on base, and if base closed down, off base would be \$3000 a month because the supply and demand would be completely out of balance, so we need something that can be like, "Hey I need to go away for a week, and I'll pay you." That's the way that it works, if you have a kid, you got to pay for it, but you need to have someplace where you can drop off a kid. You now, some people have an aunt downtown who can watch their kid. I don't, so it's either I'm putting out one of my buddies' wife, or I can't go, and so now my mission's suffering. I'm not getting my training, things like that, because it would be awesome if base had some sort of a little camp that you could drop them off for a week at a time or for a weekend or something like that. That would be stellar, but just, I think they need to have an hour or more at least on both ends of, they need to open at five, and they need to close at like six, you know, and then if you are the guy that's here until eleven or twelve o'clock, you know, okay let's let's do \$5 an hour or scale it down. \$5 a minute? You know, if you get a flat tire on the way-

S6: Then you're thirty minutes late. It's \$150.

S5: Yeah, and that's ridiculous. That's not taking care of soldiers.

S7: And then a lot of times, I know that military work's flexible. I mean, we can adjust to everything, but a lot of spouses who work downtown or civilians, if they say "Okay, well, why don't you watch your kids more, why don't your husband s come home," because

*they're not in the military. They're just like, "Well, if they leave again because they had to leave the other day, then they get fired," so then they lose their jobs, so then you're losing income. It's just, it's not conducive to-*

*S8: --It's one of those check your box, hey we got the facility here, we're here to support you, which is one of those facades, you know what I'm saying? That Fort Riley puts out there.*

*I: And do you think this childcare issue, have you been to other bases that you felt handled it better, or do you think it's specific to Fort Riley?*

*S8: Well see, my wife, like I said, my wife's not here right now. She's in (state) because she has, we have a house there, you know, that I'm still paying for and paying here, too. Um, we got, she has childcare, which is probably the way it sounds, probably about \$400 cheaper a month in (state). Um, so I mean, they open up at 5:30 'cause she has to go to work at 6, they open up at 5:30, and they don't close until I think it's like 1800 or 1830 in the evenings, so I mean, it's just-*

*I: Is this civilian?*

*S8: Yes, it's civilian, it's downtown. On post, I mean, on post childcare even at (Fort) and other bases, it's the same pretty much, I think it's the same pretty much.*

### **Other Compelling Findings**

A number of compelling findings emerged from focus group interviews and survey comments regarding factors that influenced the decision to accompany or not accompany the soldier, as well as quality of life issues in the GFRC. These issues were not related to the 11 factors that were included in the survey, but represent additional issues that participants voiced as relocation influences or quality of life issues.

#### **Perception of Limited Support at Fort Riley**

*On Fort Riley's website there's a link to go and request a sponsor. I requested a sponsor. No sponsor. So Fort Riley's not talking to me, the new (rank), let alone the individual Soldiers in assigning sponsors. We're not bringing them and their families to Fort Riley. We're not actively pulling folks. Instead we're saying, "You're not important to us," and the soldiers, you know, the individuals say, "If I'm not important then I'm leaving my family where they are important," so that was a huge factor. Um, now that I've been here for about two months, my initial impression is that some of that is command climate and that affects the reputation. Because the Soldiers that are here now and that have the impression of a current command climate talk to their buddies and say don't come to Fort Riley, and I'd heard that throughout the army. (Soldier and Spouse Focus Group)*



*They don't have a good communication with all the people in their unit. And the FRG, they're supposed to be the ones that hold everything together when you know, with the spouses when your significant other is deployed, but if they're not, they're not there and they're not trying to bring everybody together, keep everybody informed of everything, nobody's going to want to stay. Everybody's going to want to go back, be somewhere near their family or somewhere where they feel like they could kind of fit in and be with people that they know and know that they're going to be okay when their spouse is deployed. (Soldier Focus Group 1)*

**Comment [CoHE15]:** I moved this here because I didn't want to lose the comments, especially the 1st one. BG

### *Community Relations and Limited Recreation Activities*

One compelling finding that was identified by participants was the civilian perception of the military and the effect on the Soldiers and their families. Some participants perceived civilians in the GFRC as rude and prejudiced toward Soldiers and their families.

*So the community, they seem like they're military friendly, but then when they find out you are military and they're either prejudiced in some cases, or they take advantage of that financially. (Soldier Focus Group 3)*

*I've got a Soldier that lives in (place), his wife's a nurse. She's still there, because it's so much nicer. He says he goes home and they actually, like, LOVE him because he's in the military. They don't have that hate relationship that he feels around here. Literally he does not feel like going out in Junction City, or Manhattan in uniform, because he feels almost embarrassed, people like hate em'. He goes home to (place), stops at a gas station, people love him there, (mimicking voice) "Thank you for being in the military." I mean that's all he says he hears. Here, you'll never hear that. (Soldier Focus Group 3)*

*I talked to the police department in Manhattan. A Soldier and a college student get in an altercation; any type of altercation... the Soldier automatically goes to jail. The college student gets sent back to his dorm because they, the college student's paying Manhattan, or paying K-State. (Soldier Focus Group 3)*

*The lack of understanding between the University students and soldiers. There seems to be a hatred between the two. I'm not sure the Army can do anything about this; however it occurs to me that more coordinated activities between the two may foster a cooperation and understanding. (Survey Participant)*

*The Post Command not putting off base businesses off limits due to corrupt activities that harm Soldiers and their families well being, i.e. inflated rent, utilities, car dealerships overcharging, gas stations overcharging. Put these businesses off limits that commit unethical or criminal acts against Soldiers and their families. If Korea can have businesses off limits so can Ft. Riley. (Survey Participant)*



While some Soldiers and spouses were satisfied with the variety and cost of recreational activities in the GFRC, others felt that there are too few activities for families and that the activities in the GFRC are too costly. Another quality of life theme that was present was dissatisfaction with the types of businesses (specifically restaurants) that are available in the GFRC and the distance to larger cities (i.e., Topeka and Kansas City). One Soldier even stated, *"Pizza Hut in Iraq stays open later than Burger King on post"* (Soldier Focus Group 1).

*There's also not anything for children, because I have two little ones... they don't even have a Chucky Cheese here. So you would think for a military installation that businesses like Chucky Cheese... that would be a jackpot for 'em here. So I know at (place), all the lines were always packed at Chucky Cheese, but, there is nothing here for children other than the zoo. (Soldier Focus Group 4)*

*It, it's just sad that you go to Manhattan to the movies. Three people, you split a bottle of coke, you spend \$30. Just for a drink and some popcorn. If you want to go anywhere you can either go an hour to Salina, two hours almost, to Wichita or 45 minutes to Topeka and then 2 hours to Kansas City, and there's nothing here. You have rallies, you have those Sports USA. We have buildings here; we have facilities, why isn't there something going on? Something you use, utilize what you have. We have fields and fields of land, bring in carnivals, bring in rides where the, the adults can ride not just the little kiddy pooty show things and you can generate money for the post like that, too, but we've been saying that for I don't know how many years. (Spouse Focus Group 3)*

*It seems like on post, things are either geared towards families or like people with children or like the single soldiers. Kind of like, my husband and I, we don't have any kids, so we would probably feel kind of weird going to like an Easter egg hunt. (Spouse Focus Group 4)*

*I know my wife complains that Manhattan's supposed to be like the Little Apple... the trendy place to go, the place to do things, and you can see everything there is to see in Manhattan but she complains that the mall's too small (laughter) for her to go shopping... she has to drive into Kansas City or Topeka or wherever, so I don't know how many spouses, like, get upset by that, but I know... she enjoys the outdoors, but obviously she doesn't go hunting or fishing nearly as much as I like to. Yeah, I mean it's great, the outdoors here are incredible, but I'm sure a lot of spouses that are kind of in the boat where there's nothing for them to do on the weekends with their husbands, or anything that they can do together, activities. (Soldier Focus Group 4)*

*Was supposed to deploy upon getting here, wife is a teacher that has had tenure in 3 states and is tired of moving. Biggest reason is this area (I live in Manhattan) doesn't have a lot to offer a Family. Its great for the folks that live here, but its still a small town compared to*

where my family is from in San Diego, or even where they currently reside at (Name of Fort) where (city) has a population of 150,000, even when school is out. My wife and kids decided not to come here. (Survey Participant)

Please work with the communities of Junction City and Manhattan to provide adequate restaurants and shopping opportunities...as well as activities to support mothers with babies. There seem to be activities for young children but not babies. This is what I have found in my hometown but not in the Fort Riley and extending communities (Survey Participant)

Having a 3 mo. old when we moved to Ft Riley we found that there wasn't anything to do if you have smaller children. As my 3 mo. old got older and turned one the only thing we enjoyed was going to the pool at our apartment and the parks in Manhattan, that was all there was to do if you had/have smaller children. It made it hard to spend time outside of the house as a family. Manhattan needs more things for smaller children, not just school age. (Survey Participant)

Well, it is simple. You have 15,000 Soldiers on Fort Riley, and have absolutely nothing to offer them in the IMMEDIATE community. By that I mean Junction City. Just to take my wife to dinner (and have a choice) and a good movie, we have to drive 20-30 minutes to Manhattan. If I want to take my wife shopping we have to go either to Topeka or Wichita. I know Manhattan has a mall, but it doesn't compare to Topeka or Wichita. My opinion, if restaurants and bigger businesses would come to the IMMEDIATE area, where a Soldier and his family didn't have to drive at least an hour to take kids to Chucky Cheese, 30 Minutes for dinner and a movie, hour or two for shopping...more families would accompany their soldier. (Survey Participant)

With the extreme weather conditions, I wish there was an indoor play facility for children of all ages. Some thing that included playgrounds for different age groups, basketball courts, rock climbing wall, laser tag, with lots of natural light, eating area, track parents could enjoy and walk with strollers, etc. When it is too cold or hot, there is no where for the kids to play. I find the community and customer service off post to be better than on post. The services for families and Soldiers often have rude and unknowledgeable personnel. I can see improvements and see where changes are being made but I am always shocked at how we get treated on our own post. (Survey Participant)

I expected to be able to afford to put my son in recreational activities on post. I was stunned to discover that the cost for a dance class was going to average out to over \$17 an hour for a group class with 10-12 children. (other classes had comparable costs, but that was the one I was interested in.) We decided to go with community rec classes which were significantly less expensive (about \$7.50 an hour with a student/teacher ratio of about 1:6) and private lessons for music (about \$26 an hour). We do not come back to post for anything — being part of the greater Army Community used to be important to me, but since there was no housing available on post, and community activities are generally cheaper....my son really has no idea what "being in the Army" means. (Survey Participant)



No YMCA – the community activities from Manhattan Parks & Rec are difficult to get info on and I can't find swimming instruction easily. It takes 1/2 hr to get to the edge of Manhattan, which limits my ability to get my son from school and then to post activities, or to get off post, pick him up and over to activities in Manhattan, particularly if they're only offered for 1/2 a day. On post, the cool fitness activities seem to be designed around stay-at-home people, with a schedule at 9 or 10 am or later in the evening where folks who don't live on post can't do them. (Survey Participant)

Lots of people wished that there would be more Playgroups or cheaper activities to do with kids and infants. I tried to organize a meeting at the Arts and Craft, so that the women could get together and do some crafts, 90% have children. Age Range 3 month to 14 years, the Arts and Crafts told me that children are not authorized to be in there and would need to be brought into Childcare. (Survey Participant)

#### Traffic at Gates:

**There** is construction going on everywhere making the post even more noisy and the traffic congested. The increase in the heavy trucks going through posts have created a lot of destroyed roads that aren't getting fixed and making driving dangerous. (Survey Participant)

The lack of nice neighborhoods with nicer housing close to post forced us to live farther out, incurring a 30 minute drive to work each day, coming through Ogden Gate. Ogden Gate needs to be improved ASAP to handle the increase in volume that is about to happen with returning units. That choke point can add 10-15 minutes to the drive at least, and the nature of the narrowing from 2 lanes to 1 lanes as you drive on post leads to road rage as people try to pass everyone on the right. (Survey Participant)

**Comment [CoHE16]:** Not sure if we need to include this comment. There's going to be issues in construction sites, etc.

I think keep—Otherwise we only have one quote here.

**Comment [CoHE17]:** Duplication of previous comment.

#### Dual Military:

I am a dual military spouse. I chose to come here because the Division was not scheduled to deploy until my husband got back from his deployment. We planned on me deploying 6 months after he came back and him staying here with our 3 children while I was deployed. We did not want to deploy together. (Survey Participant)

#### Attitude of On-Post Civilian Employees:

The thing that I am least satisfied is the attitudes of the civilian workers on post. In my opinion when you need a question answered it almost as if you are putting them out to get something done. They are here for Soldier support and we should not get the hassle from them that I almost always receive nor should my family. (Survey Participant)



*The attitude of the civilian employees on the installation. There are several in the G-8 Travel section, finance, and promotion section that think they are doing Soldiers a favor or something rather than the fact it was the Soldier that gives them their job. I am a senior NCO and have several interactions or the Soldiers that work for me have to deal with them and we are treated like second hand citizens when we ask them to assist us with our problems. (Survey Participant)*

*Other:*

*The highest level of the command climate at this post expects entirely too much of the battalion and company level spouses. These wives work, take care of their own families and those of their spouses unit voluntarily yet are constantly under the gun of the command team on this post. The senior leaders' wives are a little out of touch with reality and should stop mandating things like the muster meeting and other protocol-supposed issues that harkens to an era pre-war and circa 1950's. The country is at war and we need to recognize that and give a little respect and time to the families who need to be with 'their families' (Survey Participant)*

## Satisfaction Questions: Army Community Services

### Survey Results

#### Percentage of Participants Who Are Satisfied, Dissatisfied, Unfamiliar or Have Never Used Army Community Services

##### Overall ACS Satisfaction Results:

**Comment [CoHE18]:** This box is not rank ordered and in the analysis I collapsed groups and recoded them so the 1-9 response set is not applicable.

ACS Program	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Unfamiliar	Never Used
Army Family Action Plan	21.8%	12.4%	5.0%	34.3%
Army Family Team Building	25.5%	13.1%	3.5%	34.7%
Army Volunteer Corps	21.7%	9.8%	5.4%	37.6%
Employment Readiness	20.2%	13.4%	3.8%	39.2%
Exceptional Family Member	19.0%	9.7%	2.8%	44.9%
Family Advocacy	20.0%	7.9%	3.6%	43.7%
Financial Readiness	24.9%	9.5%	3.3%	39.1%
Family Readiness Mobilization and Deployment	30.3%	15.7%	4.3%	27.8%
Outreach	20.8%	11.7%	4.6%	38.3%
Relocation Readiness	24.4%	16.6%	3.5%	33.6%
Other	11.6%	8.7%	---	---

### ACS Satisfaction Results for Soldiers

ACS Program	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Unfamiliar	Never Used
<b>Army Family Action Plan</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>31.2%</b>
E1-E4	17.3%	20.8%	5.9%	25.2%
E5-E6	22.8%	11.6%	3.3%	28.7%
E7-E9	30.6%	9.9%	5.0%	28.9%
O1-O3; W1-W2	16.2%	9.5%	6.7%	44.8%
O4+ & W3+	23.1%	7.7%	0.0%	46.2%
<b>Army Family Team Building</b>	<b>24.6%</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>31.5%</b>
E1-E4	21.9%	19.9%	5.0%	25.4%
E5-E6	25.5%	13.6%	1.3%	28.8%
E7-E9	32.2%	10.7%	3.3%	29.8%
O1-O3; W1-W2	15.2%	12.4%	3.8%	44.8%
O4+ & W3+	30.8%	5.8%	0.0%	48.1%
<b>Army Volunteer Corps</b>	<b>21.9%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>34.4%</b>
E1-E4	18.8%	19.3%	5.4%	28.7%
E5-E6	24.9%	9.3%	3.0%	30.2%
E7-E9	26.7%	7.5%	5.0%	35.8%
O1-O3; W1-W2	13.3%	8.6%	7.6%	47.6%
O4+ & W3+	23.1%	3.8%	5.8%	50.0%
<b>Employment Readiness</b>	<b>22.2%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>34.7%</b>
E1-E4	23.3%	18.8%	3.0%	27.2%
E5-E6	23.8%	11.9%	2.3%	30.1%
E7-E9	25.8%	12.5%	2.5%	36.7%
O1-O3; W1-W2	14.4%	10.6%	1.9%	51.0%
O4+ & W3+	15.4%	11.5%	3.8%	53.8%
<b>Exceptional Family Member</b>	<b>21.1%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>39.4%</b>
E1-E4	23.4%	15.4%	2.5%	34.3%
E5-E6	20.5%	11.3%	2.0%	35.8%
E7-E9	23.0%	6.6%	4.9%	37.7%
O1-O3; W1-W2	14.4%	6.7%	1.0%	56.7%
O4+ & W3+	25.0%	5.8%	0.0%	50.0%
<b>Family Advocacy</b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>36.9%</b>
E1-E4	25.5%	13.5%	3.0%	31.0%
E5-E6	22.8%	7.9%	2.6%	34.1%
E7-E9	23.1%	5.0%	6.6%	36.4%
O1-O3; W1-W2	17.1%	6.7%	2.9%	47.6%
O4+ & W3+	25.0%	3.8%	1.9%	55.8%



<b>Financial Readiness</b>	<b>27.0%</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>33.5%</b>
E1-E4	27.2%	14.9%	5.0%	25.2%
E5-E6	27.6%	11.3%	1.7%	30.2%
E7-E9	30.6%	7.4%	4.1%	35.5%
O1-O3; W1-W2	24.3%	8.7%	3.9%	44.7%
O4+ & W3+	19.2%	3.8%	1.9%	57.7%
<b>Family Readiness Mobilization and Deployment</b>	<b>27.2%</b>	<b>15.2%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>29.2%</b>
E1-E4	25.0%	22.5%	4.5%	23.0%
E5-E6	29.0%	14.0%	1.3%	26.7%
E7-E9	27.3%	11.6%	4.1%	32.2%
O1-O3; W1-W2	24.8%	13.3%	1.9%	39.0%
O4+ & W3+	30.8%	5.8%	7.7%	40.4%
<b>Outreach</b>	<b>21.9%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>35.3%</b>
E1-E4	23.3%	17.8%	4.0%	29.7%
E5-E6	23.8%	11.3%	2.0%	31.1%
E7-E9	24.0%	8.3%	4.1%	36.4%
O1-O3; W1-W2	10.6%	9.6%	7.7%	48.1%
O4+ & W3+	23.5%	2.0%	3.9%	52.9%
<b>Relocation Readiness</b>	<b>25.2%</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>31.0%</b>
E1-E4	24.8%	18.8%	4.0%	26.2%
E5-E6	25.7%	14.9%	2.0%	28.1%
E7-E9	30.8%	13.3%	5.0%	27.5%
O1-O3; W1-W2	19.0%	17.1%	1.9%	44.8%
O4+ & W3+	23.5%	13.7%	0.0%	47.1%

### ACS Satisfaction Results for Spouses:

ACS Program	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Unfamiliar	Never Used
<b>Army Family Action Plan</b>	<b>19.6%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>42.7%</b>
E1-E4	17.9%	12.6%	12.6%	38.9%
E5-E6	17.8%	13.0%	4.1%	42.5%
E7-E9	26.9%	9.0%	6.0%	35.8%
O1-O3; W1-W2	16.5%	7.6%	3.8%	50.6%
O4+ & W3+	23.9%	6.5%	2.2%	47.8%
<b>Army Family Team Building</b>	<b>24.7%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>43.3%</b>
E1-E4	19.8%	11.5%	8.3%	43.8%
E5-E6	21.2%	14.4%	2.7%	44.5%
E7-E9	25.4%	9.0%	6.0%	38.8%
O1-O3; W1-W2	34.2%	7.6%	3.8%	43.0%
O4+ & W3+	28.3%	8.7%	2.2%	45.7%
<b>Army Volunteer Corps</b>	<b>18.9%</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>46.2%</b>
E1-E4	17.9%	10.5%	8.4%	45.3%
E5-E6	17.1%	8.2%	4.1%	48.6%
E7-E9	22.4%	4.5%	4.5%	43.3%
O1-O3; W1-W2	16.5%	7.6%	11.4%	48.1%
O4+ & W3+	26.1%	6.5%	6.5%	41.3%
<b>Employment Readiness</b>	<b>13.9%</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>50.1%</b>
E1-E4	13.7%	15.8%	9.5%	42.1%
E5-E6	16.0%	16.7%	4.2%	46.5%
E7-E9	20.9%	6.0%	4.5%	49.3%
O1-O3; W1-W2	8.9%	8.9%	3.8%	58.2%
O4+ & W3+	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%	65.2%
<b>Exceptional Family Member</b>	<b>14.2%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>56.5%</b>
E1-E4	16.8%	10.5%	5.3%	51.6%
E5-E6	17.2%	7.6%	4.1%	53.8%
E7-E9	17.9%	6.0%	3.0%	50.7%
O1-O3; W1-W2	6.5%	7.8%	3.9%	64.9%
O4+ & W3+	6.5%	8.7%	0.0%	69.6%
<b>Family Advocacy</b>	<b>14.0%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>56.0%</b>
E1-E4	20.7%	9.8%	6.5%	45.7%
E5-E6	15.1%	9.6%	4.1%	52.7%
E7-E9	13.4%	4.5%	4.5%	56.7%
O1-O3; W1-W2	8.9%	3.8%	3.8%	65.8%
O4+ & W3+	6.5%	6.5%	0.0%	69.6%

<b>Financial Readiness</b>	<b>19.2%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>50.2%</b>
E1-E4	27.7%	11.7%	4.3%	39.4%
E5-E6	17.8%	11.0%	3.4%	46.6%
E7-E9	17.9%	6.0%	4.5%	50.7%
O1-O3; W1-W2	16.5%	6.3%	2.5%	59.5%
O4+ & W3+	13.0%	2.2%	2.2%	67.4%
<b>Family Readiness</b>				
<b>Mobilization and Deployment</b>	<b>33.8%</b>	<b>16.0%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>28.0%</b>
E1-E4	37.9%	16.8%	8.4%	23.2%
E5-E6	32.2%	16.4%	4.8%	28.8%
E7-E9	34.3%	17.9%	3.0%	22.4%
O1-O3; W1-W2	31.6%	12.7%	5.1%	34.2%
O4+ & W3+	33.3%	15.6%	8.9%	33.3%
<b>Outreach</b>	<b>17.9%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>45.8%</b>
E1-E4	22.6%	12.9%	7.5%	44.1%
E5-E6	15.8%	13.7%	3.4%	45.2%
E7-E9	22.7%	10.6%	6.1%	34.8%
O1-O3; W1-W2	12.7%	8.9%	8.9%	53.2%
O4+ & W3+	17.4%	6.5%	6.5%	54.3%
<b>Relocation Readiness</b>	<b>22.5%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>39.4%</b>
E1-E4	25.0%	14.6%	8.3%	37.5%
E5-E6	19.9%	20.5%	1.4%	41.1%
E7-E9	24.2%	16.7%	4.5%	34.8%
O1-O3; W1-W2	18.2%	20.8%	6.5%	44.2%
O4+ & W3+	30.4%	15.2%	4.3%	37.0%



## Qualitative Comments about Satisfaction With Army Community Services

### Areas of Satisfaction with ACS:

**Comment [CoHE19]:** Thought we could start with satisfaction first.

*I am most satisfied with the Armed services Youth center located on Washington and 16th st. Nancy and Denise run a great facility. Their child care services were a blessing to us when we first moved here. My son attended their summer camp weeks, which were affordable and fun. We were able to take advantage of a Family fun weekend at the local 4-H camp here last summer, which was free to military families. They offer Parents night out on Friday night for a very reasonable price and the hours are such that parents are able to have a nice sit down dinner and take in a movie in the time provided. It provides a nice break for the parents who don't have time during the week to connect. The facilities are safe and clean and they run really nice facility. Again, Kudos to Denise and Nancy!! (Survey Participant)*

*I really appreciate the parenting classes offered at Fort Riley. FRG is very supportive and Rear Detachment was very helpful to me during my husbands deployment. I really like the extra curricular activities Fort Riley offers and the help with child care so that parents may attend workshops and activities. (Survey Participant)*

*CYS is excellent! I have our 4 year old daughter in pre-school/day care since she was about 10 months old; slowly progressing from very part time, to part time, to full time. During those 3+ years we have experienced about 3 or 4 different educational programs for preschoolers and all have been very effective. With regards to CYS and, more specifically Module 5 of the Warren Rd CDC, I am extremely impressed at the progress my daughter has made. As compared to the preschool off post I had my daughter in for about 4 months prior to moving her to the CDC, I will say that the CYS/CDC program is undoubtedly superior! Not sure if it's just my daughter's Module or what, but we love her teachers, we love the daily plans, we love the amount of physical activity and educational activity she receives, and MOST importantly, our daughter loves it!! (Survey Participant)*

*FAMILY READINESS- Our unit was great in deploying for the deployment. They made sure that we all got involved in activities, or outings, things in general to help keep up the moral. (Survey Participant)*

*Soldier's FRG is amazing. I get weekly updates on news on post and the unit. I also get reminders of events that are going on post and when the next meeting is. They keep the families well informed and our very friendly. (Survey Participant)*

*I have been able to reach out to my FRG contacts with many questions since my husband has been here, even for the months before I joined him. They have been a great support and have answered any questions that I had. (Survey Participant)*

### **Areas of Dissatisfaction with ACS:**

*The Fort Riley Army Community Services, is departmentally fragmented and uncooperative amongst itself. The individual programs do not work or coordinate with one another— for example, AFTB and Relocation Assistance do not work together in informing Newcomer's of Fort Riley Community Resources. AFTB has training and skilled briefers with curriculum that is written by the Department of the Army, detailing specifically general Army Community Resources and Relocation Assistance, as welcome packets, community specific information and knowledge of the History of Fort Riley—however, these two programs do not work together to reach Newcomer's... So I began making appointments individually with various departments, trying to gather as much information as possible-- No one program was familiar with the other. My personal dissatisfaction comes because I have witnessed the positive impact that a cohesive and cooperative ACS can have on the quality of life within a military community, and ACS on Fort Riley fails to recognize that potential... I think that Soldiers here are pressured to make very important decisions without counseling and in a hurry. Legal, health, and finance. I suggest that Soldiers have appointments and be briefed on their rights and responsibilities. Especially briefed on their options and step-by-step processes for getting things done. (Survey Participant)*

*I was the least satisfied with the relocation readiness because I didn't feel that we had much help with it. They tell us the basics but if they really cared about our relocating experience more information would have been given. So much of the paperwork to out-process could not be directly done by the Soldier and that led to delay in our financial help when we relocated. Once we were placed in housing, there were no follow-ups to make sure we had everything we needed and to insure we knew what to do and where to go. It was just an all around stressful situation. When we got here, after a very long drive, we ended up trying to get lodging on post and they were booked and every hotel off-post was booked except for the dirty hotel with roaches and flying insects that we had to stay at. That wasn't a very warm welcome to thank my husband for serving and for being on time with his report date. (Survey Participant)*

*ACS - We have been here since April and have not been contacted by anyone to welcome us or explain services available. We are new to the program and have no idea what it's for other than we were required to sign my son up. I expected as a new military family and as a newcomer to the Ft. Riley area that someone would contact me personally to welcome me and let me know what is available both on and off post. However, so far, I have had to search things out myself to find whatever I am needing. I thought this would be done most likely through a Family Readiness sponsorship or something of that type. I also signed my daughter up for a youth sponsor prior to moving here and she has never been contacted by anyone to this day. (Survey Participant)*

*Relocation services when returning here from [Country] were very poor. There were very little rental units available unless we were to spend \$1200/mo rent or more. The housing office was not friendly, easy to work with, nor did they offer any assistance when trying to locate housing. When asked how long we may have to wait for housing, we were told that they could not say since we were coming from [Country]. Had we PCS'd from a stateside location, they would have been able to get me on the waiting list and provide assistance. Had I been with the division when it relocated to Ft Riley, I would have been treated to housing briefings, employment assistance for my spouse, and numerous other benefits, but because I was from a non-divisional unit, they were unable to assist us.*



*After arriving and in processing, I went into the housing office and was told that I should have called. I explained to the person there that we had and were basically told that we were on our own. (Survey Participant)*

*Financial readiness, because there are too many Soldiers in my unit that are in debt because they have no idea about interest rates and things of that nature. There is not enough information out there in the Division Area to help them. (Survey Participant)*

*EFMP- Our son is autistic and we have struggled for almost two years to get increased services, i.e., speech therapy and the system is so backlogged that appointments are months instead of a few weeks because there is such a large demand in the local area. We are still waiting to receive services through KSU which were recommended over four months ago by evaluation at Kansas University Medical Center. No one seems to be listening or is concerned. It's hard to focus on the mission when your family is still in need of assistance... (Survey Participant)*

*AER would not help me or my Soldiers when they needed it. Pay Day loans and Pioneer loans are what they had to use. If AER did their job right there wouldn't be 10 Pay Day loan places within feet of the Ft Riley Gate. (Survey Participant)*

*The Employment Readiness Program spent very little time (about 5 minutes) assisting me with finding employment. The jobs on post seem impossible to get hired for. I am extremely qualified. I have many years of experience, and have worked internationally. I have a Bachelor's degree and graduated with honors. Yet, I was still "Not Qualified" for even the simplest positions on post. (Survey Participant)*

*I am least satisfied with the job opportunities for spouses. I am employed now but when I got here it was 5 months before I could find a job b/c that job I was applying for, so were 150 other people just as qualified as I was. The Employment Readiness really didn't help at all. They helped me with my resume but as far as finding a job I was never helped in that area. (Survey participant)*

*ACAP system is worthless here- a total waste of a Soldiers time. As a soon to be retired NCO, there was nothing that was brought up in a class/ brief, that I didn't either know or knew how to get. I turned in a "draft resume" as per program requirements and two weeks later, all the "counselors" had done was ink mark grammatical errors. They failed to offer any suggestions on how to reword common military positions (such as a drill sergeant, platoon sergeant, operations NCO etc) which is what the leaving vet REALLY needs. At no time in a Soldiers career does one learn how to "de-Armify" what he/she has done over the past 20 yrs. (Survey Participant)*

*Once again the Army jerks Soldiers around which subsequently involves the spouses/families. You cannot rely on the support of FRGs nor should a military family. Living on the economy provides much better stimulus regarding friendships, relationships and much, much, much more that the Army life just possibly could not do. (Survey Participant)*

*Extremely disappointed with the FRG meetings, times are never kept, dates are never kept, and they rarely allow time between the end of the work day and the start of the FRG meeting, causing us to miss out on most of them. They need to be on a set date*



and time every month, so people who work can request off for this, I tried several times to request off to attend, only to have it rescheduled, and most employers can't allow you to take off on short notice. Just having one set date and time for those meeting every month would be a great start for improvement. (Survey Participant)

There's not an easy way for new Army wives to understand where and who to go to for everything. If there could be a handbook or something of the sort explaining Army things and who to call on Fort Riley for anything you need, it would help greatly. We live off post so I'm at even more of a disadvantage because I'm not around other Army spouses that I can ask. I think that the Army forgets that there are not only new soldiers, but new spouses that need help to. I remember my first FRG meeting, they were using acronyms and terms that I didn't understand so I remained confused the entire time. Also, I've emailed my FRG asking them several questions related to Fort Riley, just trying to find out who I would call... this was over a month ago and they still haven't emailed me back. From this experience, I can conclude that the FRG won't help me at all and they are pointless. I am extremely dissatisfied. (Survey Participant)

The FRG is, at its best, dysfunctional. Due to the size of our unit, the requirements on the FRG are too great, resulting in little to no contact to some Soldiers' spouses during this extended deployment. The result is that most families feel disconnected and ill-informed. (Survey Participant)

I lived with my husband in Kansas for only a few months, due the fact that I did not graduate college until May and he was being deployed in September. Because it was our first deployment, we decided that it would be best for me to move back home. I was under the impression that we would still know what was going on in Kansas and with my husband, and it was the wrong impression. They make me feel like I am not a true military wife because I moved back home. I received an e-mail once in a while with nothing that would pertain to me being out of Kansas. It is nice to know that they are still doing activities for the families that did stay, but what good is that to me. It is also hard, and makes me feel guilty, that they are doing all these video messages and what-not, but I can be no part of it because I moved away. We now have a new FRG leader, and I feel left out and ignored. Fort Riley does nothing for the families that moved home while their Soldier was away. I also feel that I made a good decision on moving home, because there was not a lot of support. Too many cliques. (Survey Participant)

**Comment [CoHE20]:** I moved the FRG comments here, so we would still have them, but they were in the Unit Morale/Climate section, and we deleted those.

## Program Implications

- Housing, Spouse Employment, and Deployment factors were the three main factors common to both accompanied and non-accompanied groups.

### Housing

- Off-Post rental housing and on-post housing were reported to be greater factors than purchased housing. The availability, quality and affordability of these types of housing are probably going to continue to be a primary factor affecting military families, given the current and probable continued housing market problems.
  - On-post problems with the current housing office were frequent complaints voiced by focus group and survey participants, especially related to:
    - Length of wait-list for on-post housing
    - Inaccuracy of information about wait-list time for on-post housing (e.g., informed it would be months and then were provided immediate housing when they arrived, or informed on-post housing was available but it was not when they arrived)
    - Incompatibility between off-post rental timelines and lease agreements that cannot be broken when on-post housing becomes available, which creates a Catch-22 for Soldiers
    - Changes in military policy from 1/2 to only 1/3 of Soldiers receiving on-post housing and new housing office assuming responsibility for on-post housing management may have occurred concurrently, creating additional confusion and misinformation to Soldiers
    - Changes to more inclusion within units within housing areas, rather than based on rank
      - Complaints revolved around having lower ranks living next door and bringing problems to officers and NCOs
      - Higher ranks paying more for same unit as lower ranks
    - Quality of on-post housing (old units, safety issues, problems not being fixed when reported)

### **Spouse Employment**

- Availability of employment for spouse and salary in the GFRC were factors that affected family decisions about relocation; however, these factors served as both a motivator to move to the GFRC and to not relocate to the GFRC.
- Transferability of current positions/careers also was a factor in spouses not moving to the GFRC
- Recommendations:
  - Need for improved employment services on post and greater connection with GFRC
  - Beginning process before family relocates to establish job placement; may increase incentive to relocate to GFRC if job placement occurs

### **Deployment**

- Although it might be expected that deployment factors would be the primary reason families would not relocate to the GFRC, clearly, the current study indicates that other factors also influenced this decision.
- If Soldiers were not deploying for several months or were returning to FRKS after their deployment, families were more likely to relocate to the GFRC. Conversely, when they were to deploy for more than 9 months or would be deploying within a few months of arriving to FRKS, families were more likely to not relocate to FRKS.
- Deployment factors also may affect not only relocation to GFRC but retaining families in GFRC during deployment
- One of the factors that was reported in both the Focus Groups and online survey was the inconsistency of information about deployment dates, which affected decisions about relocation.

### **Other Critical Factors**

- Housing and neighborhood factors were also reported as an area of dissatisfaction that affected quality of life for Soldiers and their families.
- Although it was not identified as a primary factor in the decision to accompany or not accompany Soldiers to FRKS, health care on-post was also an area of dissatisfaction voiced by numerous Soldiers and family members. Three predominant themes surrounding health care concerns were accessibility, timeliness, and quality of services.



- Irwin Army Community Hospital was described as “a nightmare,” “a disaster,” and “broken.”
- Soldiers and Spouses reported a lack of available appointments (often weeks or months out until they could be seen)
- Extremely long waits at the ER and Hospital Pharmacy (several hours)
- Reported feeling disrespected and receiving poor care, especially by physicians and civilian personnel
- Mixed response on Family Readiness Groups
  - Some were very negative and some were very positive about their experiences
  - This seems to vary by FRG and Unit
- Mixed response on the local Community
  - Appears to be an individual preference issue
    - Some like rural area, others do not
    - Most view the community as friendly, but a few voiced specific experiences with bias or unwelcoming behavior in the GFRC toward FR Soldiers and Family members.
- ACS Programs
  - Although a larger percentage of participants reported being satisfied with ACS programs than those who reported being dissatisfied, the percentage of those who were unfamiliar with the services and never used the services appears to be a critical result
  - Why Soldiers and Family members are not utilizing ACS programs that are available needs to be further explored

## Future Research Implications

### **Projected Activities for the KSU School of Family Studies and Human Services Center for Military Family Education and Research**

KSU School of Family Studies and Human Services plans to expand current military family research into an integrated research and education center. Funding will be used to expand current research activities, sponsor educational opportunities, and develop/assess pilot programs to provide assistance to Kansas military families.

The following timeline indicates center activities and projects focused on military families in the Fort Riley, Kansas area:

- **Project 1: Family Clinical Services Program**
  - This Project will include research, outreach, clinical and service programs focused on military personnel involved in current deployments (Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom) in the Fort Riley, KS area. This will include a clinical research program on trauma among OIF/OEF veterans and family members and the effects of deployment on individual and family functioning. The program will provide dedicated clinical services including PTSD and TBI services (individual and family counseling and speech/hearing services) and financial counseling for military personnel and their families in the Fort Riley, Kansas area.
- **Project 2: Army Families TODAY Project**
  - This Project will launch a research study of successful, "resilient" Army couples and families to determine the factors that result in strong marriages/families during OIF/OEF deployments. Areas of particular focus will include: challenges the couples have faced (including ways in which couples manage combat operational stress and secondary traumatic stress); the personal, interpersonal, and community resources they have accessed; the strategies they have used to make their relationship work during separation and reintegration; how they have negotiated parenting and co-parenting; and the advice they would give to other Army couples. This research will target the areas of "resilience" in OIF/OEF Army families across cohort/generational lines to determine the unique issues and needs that assist today's Army families in managing deployment and war stressors. Information gained from this research will be used to strengthen existing deployment and reintegration programs for couples and families or to develop new programs.
- **Project 3: Program Evaluation of Army Community Services Programs**
  - This project will launch a systematic program evaluation on the effectiveness and outcomes of the current Army Community Services programs to determine program effectiveness, impact on family support, and utilization data.

	<b>Proposed Project Timeline</b>
8/1/08	Fort Riley decision on next phase(s) of research program with KSU
9/1/08	*Official start date of KSU-FR Research Program* Project budget and contract reviewed and approved by KSU and FR
9/1/08 to 12/31/08	Project 1, Phase 1: Family Clinical Services Program (Implement FCSP through Clinical MOU and establish Services available through KSU Clinics); Identify research components of program
1/1/09 to 4/30/09	Project 1, Phase 2: Continue FCSP Clinical Services; Implement research components of program Project 2, Phase 1: Initiate participant recruitment for resilience study, including recruitment and interviews of first 15-25 couples
5/1/09 to 8/31/09	Project 1, Phase 3: Continue FCSP Clinical Services and research components of program Project 2, Phase 2: Continue participant recruitment for resilience study, including recruitment and interviews of second 15-25 couples Project 3, Phase 1: Initiate ACS Program Evaluation  Plan for Year 2 of Projects